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PRAYER FORMULARIES FOR PUBLIC RECITATION. THEIR USE AND FUNCTION IN ANCIENT RELIGION*

MATTHIAS KLINGHARDT

Summary

In order to understand the religious mentality of ancient prayer, this article investigates the mode of public praying with respect to the use of fixed formularies, for which the most relevant references from Hellenistic and Roman antiquity are collected and presented. In spite of the different religious traditions, a surprisingly homogenous picture emerges: Public prayers had to be recited in accordance to formularies whose wording was prescribed and not at will of the praying persons. The correct recitation of a formulary (and even its proper pronunciation) was meant to guarantee the prayer's appropriateness and efficacy: an improperly recited prayer was considered to be either ineffective or even dangerous. This concept accounts for several closely related aspects which can be identified in all religious traditions: (1) Usually, the particular wording of a prayer is traced back to some divine origin which afforded its efficacy; knowledge of a prayer is, therefore, the result of revelation or of divine inspiration. (2) Correspondingly, the recitation of such formularies requires some spiritual quality of the praying person (righteousness, purity, priesthood, spiritual "ability" etc.). (3) Restriction of access to prayer formularies for certain people only is expressed by the prohibition to divulge the formulary, and by the exclusion of those considered unworthy.

This picture encompasses the different religious traditions (accounting even for the "magic" prayers in the Greek magical papyri): an essential, phenomenological difference between pagan and Jewish-Christian praying cannot be substantiated. Furthermore, the concept relates to the most different hymnic genres and, therefore, can serve as the basis for a cultural comparison of ancient hymnody and for reconstructing the religious mentality of prayer.

Reflecting on the Christians' intercession for the emperor, Tertullian describes the modes of Christian prayer: "Looking up there (to

* Part of this article was presented to the "Prayer in the Greco-Roman World Group" at the 1996 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature at New Orleans (LA), Nov 23-36, 1996. — I am grateful to Stephen W. Tropisch who helped

heaven) we Christians pray with the hands outstretched, for they are innocent; with bare head, for we do not flush; and finally without a prompter, for we pray from the heart.”¹ This apologetic description evidently contrasts Christian and Roman prayer practices: *manibus expansis*, which means “stretched out crosswise”,² is opposed to the raising of the arms above the head while turning the palms upside; praying “with bare head” (*capite nudato*) is opposed to the particularly Roman custom of covering the head with the hem of the toga. Tertullian’s assertion that Christians prayed without prompters was of particular interest to interpreters, as the use of prompters is widely attested to in Roman religion as well.³ Since Tertullian’s first two arguments for the Christian mode of praying — with “innocent hands” and “without flushing” — are clearly symbolical, the praying “from the heart” was also assumed symbolical. Accordingly, the prayer *de pectore* would characterize a free prayer, streaming from a full and grateful heart, as opposed to the predetermined and formal Roman practice of simply repeating a formulary recited by a prompter. By contrasting Roman and Christian modes of praying, Tertullian clearly implies an essential opposition between Roman and Christian prayer in general, and modern interpreters have followed him in this evaluation.⁴

improve my English translation. Furthermore, I am indebted to Reuven Kimelman (Brandeis University) who made me aware of recent articles on Jewish prayers.

¹ *apol.* 30,4: “*illuc sursum suscipientes Christiani manibus expansis, quia innocui, capite nudato, quia non erubescimus, denique sine monitore, quia de pectore oramus.*” Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

² E.g., *Barn* 12,2; Justin, *dial.* 97,2; Tertullian, *idol.* 12,2; Cyprian, *or. domin.* 34; *OdSal* 21,1; 42,1-3 etc.; cf. A. Hamann, “La prière chrétienne et la prière païenne, formes et différences,” *ANRW* II 23/2, Berlin/New York 1980, 1190-1247: 1215f.

³ A small selection of relevant material has been presented by F.J. Dölger, “Vorberer und Zeremoniar: Zu *monitor* und *praeire*,” *AuC* 2 (1930), 241-251; further details are mentioned below.

⁴ With respect to the use of prompters A.G. Hamman concluded not only a difference, but even a direct contradiction between Roman and Christian prayers (*Das Gebet in der Alten Kirche* [TradChr 7], Bern/Frankfurt/New York 1989, xxxvi). F.J. Dölger (*op. cit.*, 250) considered Tertullian’s prayer *sine monitore* a particular Christian ideal that, however, eventually was overcome by (pagan) cultural traditions.

It is, however, questionable whether Tertullian is right in stressing the differences between Christian and Roman modes of prayer by implying a completely different religious mentality. The outlook changes, if the use of prompts is regarded a guarantee that the prayer's wording was not an arbitrary one, but restricted to a particular, prescribed formulary. Fixed prayer formularies existed without doubt not only in Graeco-Roman religion, but also in Judaism and Christianity. The Lord's Prayer in its various occurrences, for instance, is introduced as an obligatory formulary resisting any kind of changes: When you pray, *thus* shall you speak (Mt 6,9; Lk 11,2; Did 8,2)!

In spite of an abundance of studies on ancient prayers, their contents, genres, literary forms as well as philosophical critiques of prayers, surprisingly little is said about the problem of fixed formularies, their purpose, and ramifications for understanding ancient prayer in general. This paper attempts to fill in this gap and to explore the phenomenon of fixed prayer formularies for public recitation in ancient religion. Keeping in mind the apologetic nature of Tertullian's description, it appears prudent not to separate the Christian references from their Graeco-Roman analogies: I want to contribute to an understanding of ancient prayers that does not depend on particular religious concepts, be it pagan, Jewish, or Christian. The methodology of this approach is, therefore, at the same time *religionsgeschichtlich* and formcritical: An identical form — more precisely: an identical mode — of praying indicates an analogous religious mentality based on (and expressed by) this mode. The advantage of this approach is that it allows us to combine aspects and categories of ancient prayers that are usually separated; not only in regard to the notoriously complicated question of the different genres of hymnody and prayer, but also in distinguishing individual and public, official and private as well as pagan and Jewish-Christian prayers. Since this approach represents a first step in this direction, I felt the primary task was to collect and present the relevant material to stimulate further studies

rather than discuss aspects of the literature.⁵

I. Prompters and Prayer Formularies

I will start with the use of prompters for the recitation of prayers in Roman religion, for there is abundant proof that public prayers were conducted similarly: A prompter (*monitor*) — usually a priest, most often the *pontifex maximus*, but occasionally also the emperor or another official with religious functions — recited the formulary which was repeated by either a single person or a crowd. A famous example for the former is consul Decius' devotion in a desperate military situation: When he saw the tide of battle turn against the Roman army, he requested the *pontifex maximus* to his side in order to recite the proper words by which he could consecrate himself for the welfare of the army and the state — a procedure that was incidentally repeated by his son a generation later in a similar situation (Livy VIII 9,4; X 28,14). The example of the two Decii became famous and well known to Roman writers, and the particular formulary of their dedicatory prayer was preserved.⁶ The word used here for prompting

⁵ The literature is vast, although a comprehensive bibliography is still a desideratum (the numerous detailed volumes of *ANRW* on Roman religion do not contain a single article on prayer!). More recent studies on Graeco-Roman prayers include: J.N. Bremmer, "Greek Hymns," in: H.S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, Hope, and Worship* (SGRR 2), Leiden 1981, 193-215. — W. Burkert, "Griechische Hymnoi," in: *idem*, F. Stolz (eds.), *Hymnen der Alten Welt im Kulturvergleich* (OBO 131), Fribourg/Göttingen 1994, 9-17. — G. Freyburger, "La supplication d'action de grâce sous le Haut-Empire," *ANRW* II 16/2, Berlin/New York 1978, 1418-1439. — F. Graf, "Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual," in: Chr.A. Faraone, D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera*, New York/Oxford 1991, 188-213. — L. Käppel, *Paian. Studien zur Geschichte einer Gattung* (UaLG 37), Berlin/New York 1992. — M. Lattke, *Hymnus. Materialien zu einer Geschichte der antiken Hymnologie* (NTOA 19), Fribourg/Göttingen 1991, 1-90 (lit.!). — E. von Severus, Art. "Gebet I," *RAC* VIII, Stuttgart 1972, 1134-1258 (lit.). — H.S. Versnel, "Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer," in: *idem* (ed.), *Faith, Hope, and Worship* (SGRR 2), Leiden 1981, 1-64.

⁶ Cf. Seneca, *ep.* 67,9. Cicero, *nat. deor.* II 10; Pliny, *nat. hist.* XXVIII 12; Livy VIII 9,4-9 ("Iane, Iuppiter, Mars pater, Quirine . . .").

the formulary (*praeire*) is technical and widely attested: There exists abundant proof for *praeire verba* (or *carmen*, *vota*, *preces* etc.).⁷ Although all those prayers were public and official in character, the same applied to individual prayers as well.⁸

Prompters were also used for the prayers of crowds. Typical situations for this kind of public prayers include apotropaic ceremonies after bad omens and supplications to avert natural or political disaster: the prayer is prompted by either the *pontifex maximus*, the emperor, a priest or other officials, and it is repeated by the people or a sacerdotal *collegium*.⁹ Further typical situations include military supplications before the battle for which different modes of recitation are reported: According to Thucydides (VI 32), the whole army recited the prayers before an expedition in the Peloponnesian War; the prayers were substituted by a herold for all soldiers, and the bystanders and civilians on the shore joined in. Alexander the Great chose a different form: before the battle of Arbela, he let the priest Aristander prompt the prayers and repeated them (Q. Curtius Rufus IV 13,48). Constantine the Great let his soldiers learn the entire formulary of the supplicatory prayer by heart and recite it in unison,¹⁰ whereas Licinius' officers handed out copies with the formulary to the soldiers; they read the prayer three times, prompted by the officers (Lact., *mort. persec.* 46,10). In the last two instances, the formularies clearly existed in written form, which allows for the inclusion of the whole area of written prayers.

⁷ E.g., Livy IX 46,6; XXXI 9,9; XXXVI 2,3; XXXIX 18,3f; XLII 28,9; Tac., *hist.* IV 53,3; cf. also the acts of the *Frates Arvales* (108, 3-10 Pasoli, no. 5).

⁸ One example is reported by Juvenal (*sat.* VI 391f) who ridicules a noble Roman lady as she consulted Janus and Vesta whether her lover would win a poetic contest, and thus she "covered her head and spoke the usual words."

⁹ Livy IV 21,5 (in a supplication ceremony, the *duumviri* prompted the formulary for the people); XLI 21,11; Plut., *Cam.* 21 (the priests consecrate themselves with a vow "following the lead of Fabius, the Pontifex Maximus"); Suetonius, *Claud.* 22; Tacitus, *hist.* I 50,3 etc. — A Jewish example is 2Makk 1,23-30: the Highpriest Jonathan prompts a prayer which is repeated by the priests and by the rest of the people.

¹⁰ Eusebius, *vit. Const.* 19f (127 Winkelmann).

Graeco-Roman References

I begin with the Graeco-Roman references. A few examples make apparent that reading and prompting a prayer are just two aspects of the same matter: Pliny directly correlates both aspects when saying that prayers were “prompted from a book” (*nat. hist.* XXVIII 11). This analogy of prompting and reading is also implied when Cicero reproaches Clodius for reciting a prayer “without colleagues (who could have functioned as prompters) and without a book” (*dom.* 139). Furthermore, emperor Marcus Antoninus is praised for his ability to recite the prayers of the *Salii* “without a prompter, because he had learned all the prayers by heart” which also presupposes their existence in written form.¹¹ Since we have a number of references for the use of prayer-books in oriental religions¹² and in mystery cults,¹³ it has been maintained that this phenomenon was typical only for religions from the Hellenistic East, but not for the classical Greek and official Roman religions into which books presumably had been introduced later as foreign elements.¹⁴ This picture changes, however, when accounting for all the evidence on the use of books.

¹¹ Script. Hist. Aug. (Iul. Capitolinus), *M. Antoninus* IV 4 (II 140 Magie): “*nemine praeeunte, quod ipse carmina cuncta didicisset.*”

¹² E.g., Clement of Alexandria on the Egyptian cult: The hymn-singer “must have learned two books of Hermes(-Toth) by heart, one of them containing the hymns to the gods...” (*strom.* VI 35,3). — Pausanias (V 27,6) mentions for the Persian cult that the magician “sings a barbarian song which is in no way understandable for Greeks. He sings reading from a book (ἐπάρδει δὲ ἐπιλεγόμενος ἐκ βιβλίου)”.

¹³ In the mysteries referred to by Apuleius, prayers were recited from a book (*met.* 11,17). — The use of books is attested for the mysteries of Eleusis (Paus. VIII 15,1), of Andania (Paus. IV 26,8; *LSCG* 65), and in the cult of Mithras (F. Cumont, *Die Mysterien des Mithra*, Darmstadt ⁴1963, 136ff). — Manuals and prayer-books seem to have played a major role particularly in Orphic tradition, cf. Euripides, *Hipp.* 954; *Alk.* 967; Demosthenes, *cor.* 259. Plato condemns the Orphic manuals according to which the *teletai* are performed, obviously because such books enable the masses to engage in religious rituals without authorities present (*resp.* 364e).

¹⁴ G. Rohde, *Die Kultsitzungen der Römischen Pontifex* (RGVV 25), Berlin 1936, 64-70.

The great number of references on the pontifical books in Roman religion is certainly a good indication. Although these books certainly did not contain only prayers, but also *fasti*, legal documents and annalistic information, it is beyond any doubt that ritual instructions were at least part of them — and this includes the formularies of prayers for sacrifices and other sacral rites.¹⁵ Unfortunately, not a single copy of those books has been preserved, and thus all conclusions remain uncertain. The rich epigraphic evidence, however, compensates for these losses. In order to demonstrate that sacrificial regulations with prayer formularies were neither late nor simply an Eastern import into Roman religion, it may suffice to refer to the *Tabulae Iguvinae*: The fourteen bronze tablets contain (in Umbrian dialect) the sacrificial regulations of the city of Iguvium accompanied by a number of prayers; as indicated by the introductory formulas, the exact wording of the prayers was obligatory.¹⁶ A more intriguing example of written prayer formularies is the religious *carmen* in the cult of the *Frates Arvales*:

The records of the years 218, 219 and 240 CE state for the second day of the festival that the priests (*sacerdotes*) alone entered the building: “Locked up in there and girded, they received the booklets and, reciting the song, they danced according to these words: ‘*enos Lases iuvate [...]*’ After the dance, on a sign of

¹⁵ E.g., Valerius Maximus IV 1,10 (*libelli*). — Dionysius Halic. X 1,4 (ἱεροὶ βίβλοι); III 36,3 (cf. Livy I 32,2). — Varro, *ling. lat.* V 47ff; V 98; Paulus-Festus (204 Lindsay) s.v. *Opima spolia* (quoting Varro about the *libri pontificum*). — Cicero, *nat. deor.* I 84 (the *libri pontificii* contain the names of the gods); *dom.* 139. — Horace, *ep.* II 1,26 (*pontificum libri*). — Sueton, *div. Aug.* 97,1. — Statius, *silv.* IV 3,141ff (*evoluta charta*) etc. Rohde has collected most of the relevant material (*op. cit.*, 14-50).

¹⁶ “Use this formula” (*Tab. Iguv.* IIb 23). — “Thus speak (during the libation)” (VIa 22). — “Thus pray during the libation...” (VIb 6.26). — “Pray thus...” (VIb 9). — “Recite the identical prayer with the tri-step (dance)” (VIb 16.36). In VIa 23ff the formulary of a lengthy prayer follows which later is to be repeated several times: “Then speak exactly as at the Porta Trebulana” (VIb 2.4.23.44; VIIa 5). For text, translation and commentary cf. A. J. Pfiffig, *Religio Iguvina* (DÖAW. PH 84), Wien 1964.

them, the servants re-entered the building and took back the booklets.”¹⁷ Clearly, these *libelli* contained the formulary of this important prayer at the summit of the three-day festival; handing out the hymnals had become so important for the *Fratres Arvales* that the performance of this hymn could be rendered as singing the song (*carmen dicentes*) or as reading it (*carmen legere* in the records of 240).

The existence of sacrificial regulations with prayer formularies in one of the most traditional of all Roman cults is, therefore, beyond question and does not require further arguments.¹⁸ And it is obviously this kind of *libelli* about which Aulus Gellius stated: “The prayers to the immortal gods, as they are prayed in accordance to Roman rite, are written down in the books of the priests of the Roman people and in most of the ancient prayer-books” (*noct. Att.* XIII 23,1).

Approaching the problem of fixed formularies for public prayers in Greek religion is much easier, because a lot of epigraphic evidence is well-known and has been discussed for some time. Since the Hellenistic period, hymns, prayers, and paeans were more and more frequently inscribed in stone. Among the most famous,¹⁹ there

¹⁷ Acts of 218 (167, *ll.* 31-38 Pasoli, *no.* 88): “*Ibi sacerdotes clusi, succincti, libellis acceptis, carmen descendentes tripodauerunt in uerba haec: ‘enos Lases iuuate...’* [follows the text of the *carmen*; then:] *post tripodationem deinde signo dato publici introier[unt] et libellos receperunt.*” The same procedure, although without the text of the *carmen*, is reported in the Acts of 219 (169, *ll.* 3-4 Pasoli, *no.* 89), and again in the Acts of 240 (48, *ll.* 33-35 Pasoli, *no.* 100). On the text of the Carmen Arvale cf. R.G. Tanner, “The Arval Hymn and Early Latin Verse,” *ClQ* 11 (1961), 209-238 and E. Norden, *Aus altrömischen Priesterbüchern* (ARSHL. XXIX), Lund 1939.

¹⁸ Rohde obviously has been misled by the assumption that the cultic use of books necessarily implies that they contained a *hieros logos*, as it may be the case in some references on mystery cults mentioned above (n. 13). The fact that the *libri pontificum* or *caeremoniarum* would contain prayer formularies does not even cross his mind.

¹⁹ A small and arbitrary selection includes: *IG* IV/1², 128-134; *IG* II² 4473 (cf. *SEG* XXIII [1968], 126); *FD* III/2, 137f.190-192; *IG* II² 4510; *SIG*³ 270; *I. Creta* III 2 etc. For general discussion cf. Bremmer and Käppel (both above, n. 5), and, for the paeans from Epidaurus, P. Maas, *Epidaurische Hymnen*, Halle 1933. Further information by M.P. Nilsson, *GRG* II (HAW V/2,2), München ³1974, 60f; 372ff.

are two intriguing examples. The first is the so-called Erythraean paean:

The stone²⁰ from the cult of Apollo and Asclepius in Erythrae contains sacrificial instructions which regulate the sacrifices before and after the incubation. Hereafter, the hymnody to go along with the sacrifices is prescribed together with the first lines of a paean: "Everybody who sacrifices to Asclepius and to Apollo after the incubation or everybody who redeems his vows with a sacrifice, each of them shall, before he puts the holy parts (of the meat) on the altar, each of them shall first perform the paean around the altar three times: *Ie Paion, o ie Paion ...*" (ll. 30-40). On the backside of the stone are the remnants of another paean (ll. 41-55) and the complete text of the so-called "Erythraean paean" (ll. 56-73), followed by another paean to Seleucus (ll. 74-76), which was added about 280 BCE.

Thus the stone provides a collection of cultic hymns. The sacral instructions in the beginning qualify them as the obligatory formulae for the cultic practice. The later addition of the paean to Seleucus probably intends to borrow from the authority of the sacral law and its obligation to sing all the hymns at the sacrifice after a successful healing. More important, however, is the fact that the Erythraean paean shows up in later times at different places: In Ptolemais in Egypt, in Athens, and in Dion in Macedonia.²¹ Obviously, it was the obligatory authority the formulary of this hymn had gained from the cultic use in Erythrae that was responsible for its re-application and further propagation.

A similar "recycling" of a hymn is attested for a paean to Hygieia: Not only does it exist on two inscriptions from Epidauros and from Cassel in Germany, it also shows up in the manuscript tradition of Athenaeus, and it is further attested to by four different authors of the second and the third centuries CE, quoting from and referring to it.²² The importance of this example can hardly be overestimated. It provides a link between the epigraphical and literary evidence for hymns and prayers, thus widening the perspective for the whole Greek lyric

²⁰ *I. Erythrae* II (Engelmann/Merkelbach), Bonn 1973, nr. 205, 331-341.

²¹ For references and literature cf. Käppel, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 193.372ff.

²² For references and literature see *ibid.* 368f.

poetry: since the remnants of both, the epigraphical and the literary traditions, are fragmentary and fortuitous, we do not know in how many cases literary hymns found their way into cultic practice or, *vice versa*, how often cultic hymns were the model for literary reception. The fact that even the highly literary and textually demanding hymns of Bacchylides, Simonides, and Pindar have not been composed for a reading public, but for performance, calls for caution: it is not possible to draw a clear line between the purely literary and the cultic hymns.

Athenaeus' reception of this paean in his 'Deipnosophists' is furthermore instructive: He understood this originally sacrificial hymn as a sympotic paean which was to be sung during the libation ceremony that followed the communal meal and preceded the symposium proper. Since there is no particular connection to Hygieia and her cult, Athenaeus obviously considered Hygieia part of the classical divine trias (next to Zeus Soter and Agathodaimon) to whom libations were offered. This corresponds to the numerous voluntary associations which came into being during the early Hellenistic period and continued through the Roman principate. They all had some religious intention which usually was expressed by the prayers sung during the libation ceremony in the regular meetings: this sympotic paean was, therefore, crucial for the religious identity of the respective association.²³ Those paeans obviously had to be written down, because a hymn sung in unison could otherwise not be performed.²⁴ The transformation of this paean to Hygieia from a cultic into a sympotic setting did not invalidate its religious quality: it was transferred into a form of everyday religion of an ancient association. Thus, it is not surprising that hymns were regarded like valuable property²⁵ or

²³ On ancient associations — religious and other — and on their libation ceremonies cf. M. Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft* (TANZ 13), Tübingen 1996, 99-129.

²⁴ On the problem of hymnody in unison cf. A. J. Neubecker, *Altgriechische Musik*, Darmstadt 1977, 64.

²⁵ The statutes of the association of the Hymnodes of Augustus and Roma in Pergamum grant a reduction of the entrance fee for new members, if they bring

that the poets of acknowledged hymns were often praised.²⁶ The need of such hymns was increasing, particularly in late Hellenistic and Roman Imperial times: Virtually every public event had some religious aspects and was to be accompanied by hymns. Besides specific musical associations,²⁷ citizens, especially children, were often required to participate in this public hymnody.²⁸ The education of those hymn-singers required specially trained teachers (*hymnodidaskaloi*), about whom we are well informed.²⁹

Jewish and Christian References

So far, the existence of fixed prayer formularies in Greek and Roman religion has been clearly established. The numerous Jewish and Christian references should also be examined. Since these texts are much more familiar, my comments shall be brief. As far as ancient Judaism is concerned, we do have not only the canonical book of

along their fathers' hymns (*I. Pergamon* 374, *coll. D*, *ll.* 17f). Within a sympotic situation it is clear that each single member of the symposium contributes a *skolion* of his own: Plutarch, *QuConv* I 5 (651b); Artemon (342 *FHG* fr. 10). For the idea that hymns are a "possession" cf.: *TestJob* 14,1ff; Philo, *vit. cont.* 80f; 1Cor 14,26; Tertullian, *apol.* 39,18.

²⁶ E.g., *SIG*³ 450; 662; *IG* XII/5, 812 etc. Most intriguing is a certain Nedyllianus from Laodicea/Lycus with the impressive title: „life-long hymn-writer” (*IGR* IV 1587, *ll.* 14f).

²⁷ The most famous examples are probably the Milesian *molpoi* (*LSAM* 50) and the Pergamenian Augustus-Roma-Hymnades (*I. Pergamon* 374). Further examples include: *I. Ephesus* 900.901; *symmolpoi* from Tire (Jordanides, *MDAIA* 24 [1899], nr. 1); *IGR* III 231 (Dionysiac *technitai*); *I. Smyrna* 595 (*hymnodoi*) etc. Many similar associations existed in Rome, e.g., the famous *collegium tibicinum et fidicinum* (*CIL* VI 2191ff), which performed during public sacrifices etc. For further material cf. Klinghardt (above, n. 23) 122ff.; Bremmer (above, n. 5) 200ff.

²⁸ *OGIS* 309; *LSAM* 28; 33; 69 (= *I. Stratonikeia* 1101); *IGR* IV 1587; *SIG*³ 624; Polybius IV 20,8 (young boys in Arcadia had to memorize the ancestral paeans as soon as they could speak). For the hymnody of children cf. also Hippolytus, *trad. ap.* 25 (66 Botte): "And after dinner, they shall rise for prayer. The boys shall recite psalms, and the girls likewise."

²⁹ M.P. Nilsson, *Die hellenistische Schule*, München 1955.

Psalms in its various recensions and expansions, but also a number of other hymn-collections such as the Psalms of Solomon, numerous examples from Qumran³⁰ and, of course, the liturgical texts from the Rabbinic period onward (including the statutory prayers of the Synagogue service), the mystic prayers of the Hekhalot literature, and further examples.³¹ Of particular interest is the Mishna-tractate *Berakhot* which contains not only obligatory formularies for different kinds of (public and private) prayers, but also detailed instructions on how to perform them.³²

And Christian prayer formularies³³ include not only the Lord's Prayer and the eucharistic prayers from the *Didache* on, but also a

³⁰ A substantial part of the Dead Sea Scrolls is prayers, hymns and hymn-collections — many more than the famous *Hodayot* (*1QH*, with frgs. *4Q427-430*) and the Benedictions (*1QSb*) from cave 1; cf. the references in J. Maier, "Zu Kult und Liturgie in der Qumrangemeinde," *RdQ* 14 (1989/90), 543-586, and B. Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry*, Leiden 1994.

³¹ On Jewish prayers cf. D. C. Allison, "The Silence of Angels: Reflections on the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice," *RdQ* 13 (1988), 189-197. — J.H. Charlesworth, "Jewish Hymns, Odes, and Prayers (ca. 167 B.C.E. — 135 C.E.)," in: R. A. Kraft/G. W. Nickelsburg (eds.), *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters*, Atlanta 1986, 411-436. — D. Flusser, "Hymns and Prayers," in: *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRI 2), Assen/Philadelphia 1984, 551-577. — E. Grözinger, *Musik und Gesang in der Theologie der frühen jüdischen Literatur* (TSAJ 3), Tübingen 1982. — J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (SJ 9), Berlin/New York 1977. — S. Holm-Nielsen, "Religiöse Poesie des Spätjudentums," *ANRW* II 19/1, Berlin/New York 1979, 152-186. — M. Lattke, *Hymnus* (above, n. 5), 97-139 (lit.).

³² See below notes 55ff.

³³ Of greatest value is K. Berger, Art. "Gebet IV. Neues Testament", *TRE* 12 (1984), 47-60 (with lit.). Further important studies include: M. Hengel, "Das Christuslied im frühesten Gottesdienst," in: *Weisheit Gottes — Weisheit der Welt* I, St. Ottilien 1987, 357-404. — *idem*, "The Song about Christ in the Earliest Worship," in: M.H., *Studies in Early Christology*, Edinburgh 1995, 227-291. — M. Lattke, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 227-371 (lit.). — J. Quasten, *Musik und Gesang in den Kulturen der heidnischen Antike und der christlichen Frühzeit* (LQF 25), Münster 1930. — C. Schneider, "Paulus und das Gebet," *Angelos* 4 (1932), 11-28. — E. von Severus, *op. cit.* (n. 5).

great number of other collections of hymns and prayers, such as the *Odes of Solomon*, the prayers in Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition, the *Euchologium* of Serapion of Thmuis, the prayers in the Apostolic Constitutions, and more (not to mention the hymn-collections of Ephraem, Synesius, Ambrosius, Prudentius, and others). Many of those formularies had an obligatory character, stated sometimes along with the prayers³⁴ or guaranteed by legal prescriptions; thus, the Laodicean *canones* restrict the hymnody in the church to the choir of canonical psalm-singers and prohibit "to recite private psalms and to read non-canonical texts in the church, but only the canonical ones from the Old and New Testaments."³⁵ Origen's demand is, therefore, quite typical: "I will seem to speak daringly: in prayer it is necessary to respect the conventional formulations" — and whoever fails to do so must be aware of severe sanctions which may include even excommunication.³⁶

In conclusion, viewing prayers in ancient religions affords a surprisingly homogenous picture: in virtually all religious traditions and in the most different situations, all kinds of public prayers had to be recited in accordance with an obligatory formulary: the praying persons were not free to choose the words and formulations of their prayers for themselves, but instead, they were required to use "cer-

³⁴ Beside the mandatory character of the Lord's Prayer cf. also the similar prescriptions in Did 9,1; 10,1 (10,8 copt.). For the later stages one would like to add the liturgical agendas.

³⁵ *can.* 15 and 58 (74.78 ed. Lauchert). Similarly *can.* 23 of the third council of Carthago (396 ce; 166 Lauchert) and *can.* 12 of the second council of Mileve (416 ce; IV 330 Mansi).

³⁶ Origen, *Dial. c. Heracl.* (62ff Scherer, SC 67, Paris 1960); the necessity to agree on the prayer formularies refers to the eucharistic "oblation." The following passage concerning the sanctions for people using different formularies is hopelessly corrupt (I follow the conjectures made by Scherer); it is clear, however, that they are arranged in steps: a bishop or a priest will be removed from his office, "a deacon will not be a deacon anymore and not even a layman, a layman will not be a layman anymore and will not be admitted to the assemblies at all."

tain words”³⁷ which could be provided either by a prompter, or by reading the formulary from a writing, or by both. Therefore, Servius’ judgment on Roman prayers must be applied to the other religious traditions in antiquity as well: “In prayers nothing may be ambiguous!” (*Aen.* VII 120).

II. Magic Character and Efficacy of Prayers

The reason for the omnipresent use of formularies is easily recognizable: it is the magic character of prayers that requires a particular, fixed wording. The prayer creates a special connection between the world of the praying person and the divine sphere and from there it draws power and efficacy. The mechanism of prayers is, therefore, basically the same as in magic spells: they work *ex opere operato* and need the particular “magic words” which, like a key, allow admission to and connection with the divine sphere. This explanation, although basically correct, remains nevertheless sterile and pale. To get an adequate picture and to understand the religious mentality of prayers, an exploration of its contexts and an analysis of its related aspects and problems is necessary. For only then will the abstract explanation “magic character” gain shape.

False Prayers and Improper Recitation

That prayers must be unambiguous, as Servius states, relates first of all to the problem of efficacy: like a sacrifice not performed according to regulations, an improperly recited prayer does not have the intended effect and must be repeated. Livy reports an incident at the *Latinae* festival in Lanuvium (176 BCE) in which the officials had failed to include the formula “For the Roman People of the Quirites” (*populo Romano Quiritium*) into a sacrificial prayer. The senate and the pontifical board decided the sacrifice must be repeated (at the

³⁷ E.g.: Pliny, *nat. hist.* XXVIII 11; Seneca, *ep.* 67,9; Cicero, *nat. deor.* II 10; *har. resp.* 23; Macrobius, *sat.* III 9,3; Ovid, *fast.* 8,387; Arnobius, *adv. nat.* IV 31; Juvenal, *sat.* VI 392; Paulus-Festus (78 Lindsay) *s.v. Fanum: certa verba fatur* etc.

expense of the city of Lanuvium), “*quia non recte factae Latinae essent*” (Livy XLI 16,1). Plutarch mentions an extraordinary situation in which “a single sacrifice has been performed thirty times, because time and again some failure or offense was thought to have occurred” (*Coriol.* 25,3). Evidently, sacrifices with false prayers were considered as ineffective as sacrifices without prayers at all,³⁸ and it is not surprising that improper recitation of public prayers played a significant role among possible mistakes at sacrificial ceremonies.³⁹ An intriguing and well-known example for the inefficiency of an improper prayer is the lawsuit over Cicero’s house.

When Cicero was in exile, his political opponent Clodius destroyed Cicero’s house and dedicated a part of his Roman premises on the Palatine hill to the goddess *Libertas*. In the following year the senate, alienated by Clodius’ behavior, decided to call Cicero back, to compensate for his losses, and to return all his property to him.⁴⁰ Clodius objected against the latter: once something was dedicated to the gods, it was *res sacra* and could not be taken from them again. The senate transferred the whole matter to the *collegium pontificum* where Clodius and Cicero were to explain their positions. In his speech “*de domo sua*” addressing this pontifical board, Cicero argued that his premises never really belonged to the goddess, because the dedication was invalid: even if the procedure had been legal, nothing validated the actions of “an unexperienced young man, who only recently had been appointed to priesthood, . . . without colleagues, without books, without a prompter, without the (ritual) baker, secretly, with clouded spirit and a halting voice (*mente ac lingua titubante*) [. . .] You were told . . . , how this one used a distorted formula (*praeposteris verbis*), and how he — amid inauspicious omens, constantly correcting himself, by fearful and faltering hesitation — pronounced phrases and performed rites entirely different from those contained in your documents” (*dom.* 139f).

³⁸ Pliny, *nat. hist.* XXVIII 11: *victimas caedi sine precatione non videtur referre*.

³⁹ E.g., Cicero, *har. resp.* 23; Arnobius of Sicca, *adv. nat.* IV 31 etc.

⁴⁰ In 58 BCE (after Caesar had left for Gallia) the tribune Clodius passed a decree banishing everybody who had put a Roman citizen to death without a trial; this was meant for Cicero having executed Catilina and his co-conspirators. In a second decree, Clodius mentioned Cicero’s name, banishing him 400 miles from Rome; Cicero left Rome for Thessalonica. The law lifting the ban on Cicero dates from Aug. 4, 57 BCE.

Since the whole affair had a deeply political character, one may ask how convincing this particular argument may have been. But the *collegium pontificum* was consulted for its expert opinion on religious matters, not for a political statement, and Cicero provided the necessary arguments fitting the religious categories. In the end the pontifical board and subsequently the senate gave a ruling in Cicero's favor.

Interestingly, Cicero's argument does not rely only on Clodius' use of a false or incomplete formulary, but also on his poor and unsatisfactory pronunciation — he stuttered (*se ipse revocans*), spoke with a halting voice (*lingua titubante*), and lacked the necessary firmness of mind, voice, and tongue (*neque mens neque vox neque lingua consisteret*): a correct recitation of the formulary would include a clear and fluent pronunciation. Pliny, for instance, reports that the *pontifex* Metellus, who had an enunciation handicap (he stuttered on behalf of a “strangled tongue”), tortured himself for many months practicing the proper formulary for the dedication of the *Ops Opifera* sanctuary (*nat. hist.* XI 174). In Latin the “clear or solemn voice” (*vox clara, sollemnis* etc.) even became a technical term for the proper recitation of prayers; thus, Ovid can state: *sollemni satis est voce movere preces* (*fast.* 6,622).⁴¹

A prayer's efficacy was, therefore, invalidated not only by the false or interrupted⁴² recitation, but also by the poor and stammering pronunciation. This explains Pliny's description of the sophisticated manner for the public performance of prayers which required a number of assistants. First there is the prompter who reads the formulary from a book in order to avoid skipping or misplacing a word. A second person must stand by as a guard to oversee the proper procedure. A

⁴¹ E.g., Livy X 18,16; 36,11; XXXIX 15,2; Cicero, *dom.* 122; *pro Murena* I 1; Seneca, *ep.* 67,9; *cons. ad Marc.* 13,1; Val. Maximus V 10,1; Statius, *silv.* IV 3,142; Apuleius, *met.* 11,16; Pliny, *ep.* 35; Script. Hist. Aug. *Anton. Heliog.* 15 etc.

⁴² A famous example was *pontifex* Pulvillus' dedication of the Capitol: During the ceremony he was told about his son's death; he nevertheless “pretended that he did not even hear the message and finished the solemn words of the pontifical song, not even with a moan interrupting the prayer” (Seneca, *cons. ad Marc.* 13,1; cf. Livy II 8).

third person has to make sure everybody is quiet, a fourth one must play the flute so that no sound other than the prayer may be heard. The fifth person is the one who actually prays, repeating the prompted formulary. It is well to remember, so Pliny concludes, how often mistakes in those prayers have caused severe damage. That false prayer can even be dangerous is clear from the case of king Tullus Hostilius who made a mistake in an invocation to Jupiter and was struck by a lightning.⁴³

This description springs from a clear conception of what was truly required in order for prayers to be effective: Since any sound may affect the gods, everybody present at public ceremonies must be silent,⁴⁴ and even the sound of non-human origin may disturb (and thus invalidate) the prayer — including the squeaking of mice! Even if this example is exceptional, fitting only the ceremony of auspices,⁴⁵ it is clear that the effect of a prayer was dependent on the words that were actually spoken rather than those the praying person had in mind. This differentiation is interesting and important. It accounts, by the way, for the fact that (public) prayers were usually recited audibly: silent prayers were suspicious.⁴⁶ Since their contents could not be con-

⁴³ Pliny, *nat. hist.* XXVIII 11-14. The whole passage (10-29) played a major role in the discussion, cf. Ä. Bäumer, "Die Macht des Wortes in Religion und Magie (Plin., Nat. Hist. 28,4-29)," *Hermes* 112 (1984), 84-99; Th. Köves-Zulauf, *Reden und Schweigen: Römische Religion bei Plinius Maior* (STA 12), München 1972, and others.

⁴⁴ Thuc. VI 32; Aristophanes, *Thesm.* 295ff; Plutarch, *Coriol.* 25,2; Ovid, *met.* 15,677.680 ("Whoever present, watch your mind and tongue... Whoever present, repeat the words of the priest!") etc.

⁴⁵ Pliny, *nat. hist.* VIII 223: "For we have our records full of instances of the auspices being interrupted by the squeaking of shrews." On the silence during the prayers particularly of the auspices, cf. Livy XLI 16,1; Plut., *Coriol.* 25,3; Paulus-Festus s.v. *caduca auspicia* (56 Lindsay), and G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (HAW IV 5), München 2nd ed. 1912 = repr. 1971, 530.

⁴⁶ In Graeco-Roman antiquity praying out aloud was normal, whereas praying inaudibly was always connected to particular situations only. P.W. van der Horst, "Silent Prayer in Antiquity," *Numen* 41 (1994), 1-25, collected ample evidence for these exceptions and demonstrated that this picture changed in Roman Imperial times,

trolled, they bore the odour of illicit ritual. This is the basic rationale for Plato's critique of private rituals (above, n. 13) as well as for the accusation against Apuleius in 155 CE: "You uttered silent prayers to the gods in a temple, you are a *magus*" (*apol.* 54,5).⁴⁷ The distinction between (legitimate) audible and (illicit) silent prayers required the prescription: "*uti lingua nuncupassis, ita ius esto*" (*XII Tab.* 6,1). The fact that the effect of prayers depended on what was actually said, not on what the praying person had in mind is demonstrated by an incident reported by Livy when (in 304 BCE) Cn. Flavius illegally dedicated the temple of Concordia: "Cornelius Barbatus, the *pontifex maximus*, was forced by unanimous demand of the people to prompt the formulary, although he explained that, according to ancestral custom, only a consul or an imperator could dedicate a temple" — the efficacy of the prayer (and, thus, the validity of the dedication) is independent of Barbatus' intentions: only the wording counts.⁴⁸

These ideas on prayers' effectiveness, however, are not particular to Roman religion. A correlation between clear pronunciation and efficacy of prayers, similar to the example of the Cicero-Clodius controversy, is demonstrated in an anecdote about R. Chanina ben Dosa in the Mishna. R. Chanina knew in advance whether a prayer for the sick was efficient or not, and he could thus say: this one will live, this one will die. When he was asked, how he knew, he answered: "If my prayer is fluent in my mouth, then I know he will be accepted. If it is not fluent, then he will not be accepted" (*Ber* V 5b).⁴⁹ This anecdote illustrates the regulations about the proper recitation of the daily prayers (*Ber* IV.V), in which we find close analogies to most of

due to the deep influence of Neoplatonic ideas about the noetic, immaterial character of the divine sphere (*ibid.* 10ff).

⁴⁷ For the wider context of this problem cf. H. G. Kippenberg, "Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals Could Be Illegal," in: P. Schäfer, H.G.K. (eds.), *Envisioning Magic*, Leiden 1997, 137-163 (on Apuleius: 143ff).

⁴⁸ Livy IX 46,6. Bileam's problem in Num 23f is similar: he can only say what is given to him by God (23,13); had he cursed Israel, the curse would be effective.

⁴⁹ Cf. Sh. Naeh, "Creates the Fruit of Lips: A Phenomenological Study of Prayer according to Mishnah Berakhot 4:3, 5:5," *Tarbiz* 63 (1993/94), 185-218.

the aspects already mentioned for Roman religion. The proper formulary (in this case: of the *tefillah*) must be recited in full (*Ber* IV 3), it must be spoken clearly,⁵⁰ the prayer must not be interrupted even during severe situations (*Ber* V 1), the prompter's public prayer must be flawless (and in case, he makes a mistake, somebody else must take over his position, *Ber* V 3b), and erroneous or false recitation is a dangerous omen.⁵¹ These references, proving the importance of the proper recitation of prayers in Rabbinic Judaism, are not exceptional, but normal, based on the well-known correspondence between heaven and earth: whatever happens in heaven has an effect on earth, and *vice versa*. It is easy to imagine that in Talmudic times certain prayers were considered to have an immediate and automatic effect on God.⁵² Due to the sophisticated angelology (and the angels' inclination for misunderstanding) this is true not only for prayers proper, but also for unintentional utterances.

A very instructive example for the effectiveness of unintentional utterances is the midrashic interpretation of Jacob's words that whoever had Laban's gods in possession should not live, not knowing that Rachel had taken them (Gen 31,32). Since this phrase, although meant as a mere assertion of innocence, is in fact a self-inflicted curse, the midrashim made up a connection between this curse and Rachel's premature death (Gen 35,18f). They explained this connection as an

⁵⁰ One example is the discussion on the pronunciation of the *šema'* in *Ber* II 3: R. Yose considers the recitation "without distinguishing the letters" as sufficient, R. Judah does not. The discussion between R. Obadiah and Raba in *bBer* 15b (Bar.) is concerned with the spaces between the letters which must be pronounced audibly, e.g., in 'l lbbk "on your heart" (Dtn 6,6): The two "l" must be kept apart (with further similar examples); cf. also *DtnR* 2 (199b); *pBer* 2 (4b) 40; 2 (4d) 44 etc.

⁵¹ *Ber* V 5a; cf. above, n. 43 and *3En*(hebr) 40,2ff: Metatron explains to R. Ishmael that each of the angels reciting the "Holy!" in the correct order will receive three crowns as a reward. When, however, they "do not recite the 'Holy!' in its (proper) order, a consuming fire is coming forward from the little finger of the Holy, praised be He! The fire falls into the middle of their numbers... and consumes them all at once."

⁵² E.g., Job 22,28 (cf. *bKet* 103b); *bMQ* 16b; *bShab* 63a; *bBM* 85a. 106a; *bTaan* 23a; *pTaan* 3 (67a) 12. For the whole problem cf. J. Z. Lauterbach, "The Belief in the Power of the Word," *HUCA* 14 (1939), 287-302.

“assumption that (the curse) came from the Ruler” (*QohR* to 10,4; *GenR* 78,6) which implies: the angels misinterpreted this utterance as a divine order, acted accordingly, and caused Rachel’s death.⁵³ Jacob, of course, never intended this outcome, but his words were heard as a prayer and thus fulfilled.

Intensity of Homophonic Prayer

So far, the interdependence between the prayers’ efficacy and their exact recitation according to the prescribed formulary has been illustrated, and not only in regard to pagan prayers. One more important aspect, however, needs to be mentioned. Most of the material presented so far refers to public prayers of individuals, but not to the prayers of groups. To understand the importance of common prayer, it is useful to pay attention to the various possibilities of performing common prayers. There are different options: (1) *Homophonic repetition*: The prompter recites the formulary *stichus* by *stichus*, the group repeats each single line in unison. This was probably the most common mode, it fits the structure of the Greek hymn with its short, asyndetic lines.⁵⁴ (2) *Homophonic response* is attested for Jewish and Christian prayers only: the prompter alone recites the entire prayer; the group does not repeat single lines of the formulary, but instead incorporates it by a common response in unison. Most common was the Amen response, but there are a number of other examples, particularly in litanies.⁵⁵ (3) *Antiphonic recitation* in synthetic parallelisms:

⁵³ Even clearer is this connection in *Pirqe de R. Eliezer* 36 (84b) or in *Midrash ha-gadol* (to Gen 31,32) ed. S. Schechter, Cambridge 1902, 492. Similar references about unintentional utterances taken for prayers include: *pShab* 14 (14d) 4; 16 (15c) 1; *pSotah* 9 (24c) 16; *bMQ* 18a; *bKet* 23a; *bBM* 68a; *QohR* to 10,4. For more details see Lauterbach, *op. cit.*, n. 52, 297f. with n. 46.

⁵⁴ Dölger (*op. cit.*, n. 3, 244) suggests that the Decii’s devotion was recited in a *stichus* form. It would fit the prayer in 2Makk 1,23-30 or the prayers *ConstApost* VII 36f as well.

⁵⁵ For the Amen response cf., e.g., *bSota* 39b (for the recitation of the *tefillah*) or Justin, *Iapol* 67,5 etc. The Amen was usually prompted by a doxology, e.g., in the prayers of the *Didache* or in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthean version). Besides Amen, the *hallelujah* is a typical response (for the recitation of the Hallel-psalms 113-118

The recitation of the formulary is divided between a prompter and a choir or between two choirs. This form, which is attested, e.g., for the recitation of the *šema'* in synagogue-worship⁵⁶ or the angelic praise in heaven,⁵⁷ clearly presupposes that the whole group knows the entire formulary by heart. This is also true for (4) *homophonic recitation*: in this case, the group or choir jointly recites the entire formulary without a prompter, either by heart or by reading from a book.⁵⁸ This is what Tertullian had in mind when he distinguished the Christian prayer *de pectore* from the Roman prayer *monitore (praeeunte)*, and he is most probably referring to the Lord's Prayer whose formulary, instituted with a maximum of authority, existed in written form.

The different possibilities for reciting a given formulary⁵⁹ create a problem that has received much attention in Rabbinic Judaism. Since only the homophonic recitation in unison is, literally speaking, a common prayer, the interest concentrates on the question whether a simple response can be considered a valid prayer. The unanimous answer is that the common response resembles a vital and substantial participation in the common prayer and, therefore, must be seen as

which were recited during most festivals, cf. *Sukka* III 10). According to *pShab* 16,1 (15c) the prompter recited the text of the psalms and the congregation responded after each half-*stichus*, all in all 123 times! For Christian use cf. Hippolytus' regulations on the *lucernarium*, *trad. ap.* 25 (66 Botte). Further examples for responses and litanies are mentioned by Heinemann (n. 31) 144ff.

⁵⁶ E.g., *Tos. Sota* VI 3. The modes of recitation of the *šema'* are subject to a lengthy debate, cf. the material collected by H.L. Strack, P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* IV/1, München 1961, 189-207; see further R. Kimelman, "The Shema' and Its Rhetoric: From Covenant Ceremony to Coronation," in: *David Halivni Weiss Jubilee Volume* (forthcoming, *non vidi*).

⁵⁷ Usually in interpretations of Isa 6,3, cf. in the *Sepher Ha-Razim* (ed. M. Margalioth, Jerusalem 1966, 90 ll. 179f): "They stand half against half, one half singing, the other half chanting in antiphone;" cf. also Neh 12,24; 2Chr 5,12f; 7,6.

⁵⁸ *MidrCant* 8,14 (134a) attests this form for the recitation of the *šema'*: "The Israelites recite the *šema'* with one mouth, with one voice, with one pronunciation..."

⁵⁹ In *Tos. Sota* VI 2f they are all mentioned in a discussion of the appropriate mode for the recitation of the song Ex 15,1-18.

completely equivalent to the recitation of the prayer by a prompter⁶⁰ — which incidentally implies that errors made by the prompter revert back to the congregation who hired him (*Ber* V 5a). Subsequently, the clear and proper pronunciation of the Amen-response became an important issue: the Amen must not be “orphaned” (i.e. it is not permitted to recite the Amen without having heard the preceding benediction), it must not be “cut off” (probably referring to clearly pronouncing the final letter), it must be spoken not too fast, not too quiet nor too loud, but in exactly the same voice as the benediction to which it responds.⁶¹ The visible efforts to equate antiphonic responses with homophonic recitation indicate that this equivalence was not generally accepted.

Indeed, the unisonous prayer was considered particularly valuable for a simple reason: it was more effective than the prayer of single persons. A fragment by Petronius states bluntly: “We too will strike the stars with words in unison; the saying is that prayers travel more valiantly when united.”⁶² It is, therefore, only wise to recite a prayer in unison, if it asks for something extraordinary.⁶³

Athanasius used this idea of the increased effect of homophonic prayer in his apology. He defends himself against the charge that he had celebrated a worship service in a church still under construction and not yet consecrated: “Should we

⁶⁰ E.g., *DtnR* 7,1 (203d): “There is nothing which the Holy One — Blessed be He! — values more than the ‘Amen’ with which Israel responds.” — *bBer* 53b (“Greater is he who answers ‘Amen’ than he who pronounces the benediction”). — *bShab* 119b (“The gates of paradise are open for anyone who responds ‘Amen’ with all his might”). — *bNaz* 66a; *bShab* 119b; *pShebbit* 4 (35c) 31.34 etc. Among the Christian witnesses is Clement of Alexandria: “We raise our heads, extend our hands toward heaven, and stand up on tiptoes reciting the final words of the prayer, for we want to follow our spirit up into the spiritual world” (*strom.* VII 40,1: *GCS* 17, 30,20f).

⁶¹ E.g., *Tos. Meg* IV 27; *bBer* 47a (Bar.); *pBer* 8 (12c) 42; *pSukka* 3 (54a) 11 etc.

⁶² Petronius, *fr.* 92 (96 Baehrens, *Poetae Latini minores* IV, Leipzig 1882 = Büchele XLII): “*Nos quoque confusis feriemus sidera verbis / fama est coniunctas fortius ire preces*” (transl. by M. Heseltine in the LCL-edition).

⁶³ E.g., Pindar, *Pyth.* 3,1-4: “Oh, I wish that Chiron, son of Philyra, were still alive, if we are permitted to pray with our tongue a *common prayer* . . .”

divide the people and tear it apart in a dangerous crush? Was it not better, since a room big enough for all was already at hand, to assemble there and to raise *one and the same voice* in the symphony of the people? The latter was better, for it also showed the unanimity of the crowds: thus God hears quickly. For if according to the Saviour's promise only two unite their voices, everything they ask for will be granted (Mt 18,19f), how much more then, when from so many gathered people *one single voice* is raised when they call to God the 'Amen'?"⁶⁴

In Jewish and Christian contexts the homophonic prayer is often combined with the idea of the joint prayer with the angels of the heavenly court.⁶⁵ In this respect, it is not only understandable that a fixed prayer text is required, it is also clear that this joint prayer affords an increased effect: since the earthly prayer mingles with the angels' heavenly praise, it is certainly heard. Again, the underlying concept is the correspondence between heaven and earth, in this case the correspondence between earthly and heavenly service.⁶⁶ As it is

⁶⁴ Athanasius, *Apologia ad imperatorem Constantium* 16 (105,14ff Szymusiak).

⁶⁵ Besides the military supplication of Constantine (above, n. 10: the army prays "ἐξ ἑνὸς συνθήματος ὁμοῦ") cf. by way of example: Isa 52,8; Job 31,8; *1En*(eth) 47,2; 61,10f; *AscIsa* 7,15; 9,28; *1QH* III 20ff.; XI 11ff.; XVIII 23; *1Clem* 34,7; Ignatius, *Eph* 4,1f. Examples from the ancient church include: *ApcPetr* 4,19 (fragments from Akhmîm, E. Klostermann, *Apocrypha I* [KIT 3], Bonn ²1908, 10): "They who lived there had the same glory and with *one voice* they praised the Lord." — Gregory Nazianzen, *Carm.* lib. II, sect. I 1, 280 (PG 37, 991); the angelic choirs send their hymns to God "singing with many mouths, but yet with *one united voice*." — Cyprian of Antioch, *Confessio* 17: "Then we went into the church and saw the choir, which resembled a choir of heavenly god-men or a choir of angels, praising God. They added to each single vers a Hebrew word with *one voice*, so that one might believe they were not (a multiplicity of) men, but rather one single rational being sounding wonderfully . . ." (quoted by Quasten, *op. cit.* n. 33, 99f n. 27). — On the heavenly cult see E. Peterson, "Der himmlische Kultus in Kapitel 4 und 5 der Geheimen Offenbarung," *BiLe* 1 (1934), 297-306, and the commentaries on Rev 4f. Interestingly, the Muses, who typologically and functionally resemble the angels in Jewish texts, are said to praise Zeus in unison (Hesiod, *theog.* 39).

⁶⁶ On the cultic community between angels and Israel cf. B. Ego, *Im Himmel wie auf Erden* (WUNT II/34), Tübingen 1989, 62-72 (with interesting Rabbinic references); M. Weinfeld, "The Heavenly Praise in Unison," in: I. Seybold (ed.), *Meqor Hayyim* (FS G. Molin), Graz 1983, 427-433.

well known, this concept was adapted not only in Jewish mystic literature, but also in the liturgies since antiquity, and to this day is expressed in most Christian churches by the introductory formula of the *Sanctus* in the thanksgiving prayer of the eucharistic liturgy.⁶⁷

Sociological Aspects

It is, of course, not accidental that in early Christianity the eucharistic prayers in particular existed in fixed formularies for homophonic recitation: The prayer following the communal meal emphasized the religious identity of the respective community and expressed the unity of its members. In early Christianity the unity-motif of the homophonic prayer⁶⁸ was developed in close analogy to the sacramental imagery of the one bread reflected upon in respective prayers.⁶⁹ And in contrast to a widespread assumption it is worth noting that the fixation of obligatory formularies for those prayers is not a “late”

⁶⁷ For Jewish references cf., e.g., the *Shirot 'olat ha-Shabbat* (4Q400-407 etc. ed. C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, Atlanta 1985) or the Hekhalot-literature (P. Schäfer [ed.], *Synopse zur Hekalot-Literatur* [TSAJ 2], Tübingen 1981), and, in particular, the material collected by M. Weinfeld (*ibid.*, 429ff). To be added, e.g., *PesR* 20 §11,4 (97a): The angels “speak with one single voice (*bph 'hd 'mrym*).”— Since the Trishagion is at the center of the Christian eucharistic liturgy, it is present in all liturgical traditions.

⁶⁸ E.g., Cyprian, *or. domin.* 8 (“The teacher of peace... objected to praying singly and separately, so that, if somebody prays, he only prays for himself... Public and common is our prayer, and when we pray, we pray not for one person, but for the whole people, for we are the whole and one people”); Hippolytus, *trad. ap.* 35 (82 Botte): it is better to “rush into the church where the spirit is alive” than to pray privately at home etc.

⁶⁹ Most clearly in 1Cor 10,16: the two relative clauses (the cup of blessing) “which we bless” and (the bread) “which we break” refer to the prayer gestures over the cup at the end of the meal and over the bread at its beginning; those prayers create the specific, christologically qualified *κοινωνία* of the congregation. Further references include the One-bread-metaphor of early Christian prayers, e.g., Ign., *Eph* 20,2; Did 9,4; Serapion of Thrmuis, *Euchol.* XIII 13 (II 175 Funk); (Ps)Athanasius, *de virgin.* 13 (47 von der Goltz); P. Dér-Balizeh II *verso* 3ff (26 Roberts-Capelle); Cyprian, *ep.* 63,13 (III/2, 712 Hartel) etc.

development of the third century.⁷⁰ Instead, the prayer formularies of the *Didache* prove that this phenomenon is much older and may even reach back to the Pauline eucharistic prayers: the fact that their formularies are not preserved does not mean that they never existed.⁷¹

The eucharistic prayers, the pagan sympotic paeans, and the Jewish grace after meals (the *birkat ha-mazôن*) resemble each other in at least three aspects. First, there is an identical mode of performance: all prayers were recited in unison.⁷² Secondly, they were sung for the same occasions: in pagan symposia the paeans accompanied the libation ceremony as the sacrificial prayer for the wine offering from the *krater*; the Jewish *birkat ha-mazôن* was recited over a cup of wine after the meal, and the Christian eucharistic prayer was recited “likewise, after the meal” (1Cor 11,25 etc.). And finally, this prayer after the meal secured the religious identity of the group: different groups have different prayers. This motif may not have been as important in pagan antiquity, but for ancient Judaism and early Christianity it was often critical: in *JosAs*, for example, Joseph’s Jewish identity is expressed by his praise of the living God; this is illustrated by the sympotic blessings over the bread, the wine, and the ointment

⁷⁰ E.g., W. Geerlings, *Traditio Apostolica* (FChr 1), Freiburg/Basel/Wien etc. 1991, 193: For the time of Hippolytus (around 200 CE) it was natural that the bishop could recite the eucharistic prayers at his will and ability.

⁷¹ Cf. Chr. Burchard, “The Importance of Joseph and Aseneth for the Study of the New Testament,” *NTS* 33 (1987), 102-134: 126: “The eucharistic blessings (i.e. of 1Cor 11,26) must have had some appropriate wording, but we do not know what it was, unless Did 9f. permits a guess.”

⁷² Cf. Plutarch, *QuConv* I 1,5 (615a/b): as opposed to the monodic *skolia*, they “first sang the song of the god, all together performing with *one voice* the paeon.” Philochorus (328 *FGrHist* fr. 172) points out that during the libations in earlier times no (dionysiac) dithyrambs were sung; instead “they honored Dionysus by wine and drunkenness, but Apollo (i.e. Apollo Paean) (by songs) in quiet and good order” — the dithyrambs were considered passionate and restless, the paeon is sung in well arranged measures (Plutarch, *de El* 389a). On the *birkat ha-mazôن* cf. L. Finkelstein, “The Birkat Ha-Mazon,” *JQR* 19 (1928/29), 211-262; Klinghardt (*op. cit.*, n. 23), 418ff.

(referring to the sympotic anointment).⁷³ Since eating, drinking, and sympotic anointment is not a Jewish particularity, the implied opposition to Aseneth refers to the specific Jewish blessings recited for dinner, libation, and symposium. Interestingly, the demarcation between Jews and Non-Jews is not defined by circumcision, by Sabbath observance, or by ritual regulations, but by the particular wording of the benedictions within the context of a communal meal: What the community stands for is defined by its sympotic prayers.

This idea is not unique: a number of Christian references⁷⁴ indicate that the particular wording of the eucharistic prayers distinguishes between orthodoxy and heterodoxy:

Irenaeus blames a Gnostic heretic for his illegitimate extensions of the invocation's formulary (*adv. haer. I* 13,2).⁷⁵ Cyprian attacks a Novatian bishop who "raises unauthorized voices in a rival liturgy (*precem alteram illicitis vocibus facere*)" (*de unit. eccl.* 17). At the same time, bishop Firmilian complains about a Cataphrygian prophetess who pretended "to sanctify the bread, to celebrate the Eucharist, and to offer the sacrifice to the Lord without the mystery of the regular prayer formulary (*sine sacramento solitae praedicationis offerret*)" (Cyprian, *ep. 75,10,5*). And Basil of Caesarea, arguing against the Pneumatomachians, considers the proper recitation of the doxology in the form "through the Son, *with* the Spirit" as sufficient proof for orthodoxy, whereas the Pneumatomachians would prefer the wording "through the Son *in* the Spirit" (*de spirito sancto 3*).⁷⁶ Basil finds the ultimate argument in the fathers' agreement on his preferred version; one of his witnesses is Dionysius of Alexandria — who, not surprisingly and now on his part, relies on the same agreement between the wording of his own prayers and those of the fathers before him in his defense against the charge of Sabellianism: "We formulate our thanksgiving in unison (δύοφώνως) with them."⁷⁷

⁷³ *JosAs* 8,5, cf. also 8,9; 15,5; 16,16; 19,5; 21,13f.21.

⁷⁴ Collected by R.P.C. Hanson, "The Liberty of the Bishop to Improvise Prayer," *VigChr* 15 (1961), 173-176.

⁷⁵ Hanson, *op. cit.*, 173, erroneously has I 7,2. The passage is preserved by Epiphanius, *haer. 34,1-3* (GCS 31,5ff).

⁷⁶ *Basile de Césarée, Sur le Saint-Esprit* ed. B. Pruche (SC 17 bis), Paris 1968, 257.

⁷⁷ Basil, *de spirito sancto* 72 (504 Pruche). The quotation is from Dionysius' lost *Refutatio et Apologia*.

The Christian uses of obligatory formularies in particular illustrate the well-known dimensions of religious and of social identity which are indispensable for any group's self-definition. The formulary of the eucharistic prayer has an integrating, consolidating function with regard to internal relationships: the homophonic recitation represents the congregation's unity, and its wording usually contains at least a trace of, if not an explanation of, the original reason for the group's solidarity.⁷⁸ Moreover, the particular formularies mark a distinction which excludes outsiders and highlights those boundaries which define the community. Since all the major dogmatic arguments of the early church had liturgical implications — leaving such traces in prayers and doxologies —, I claim that it is possible to establish a comprehensive heresiology of early Christianity by applying the phenomenon of obligatory formularies.⁷⁹

That the particular wording of important prayers reaffirms internal relations and excludes all outsiders is, of course, the case not only for the eucharistic prayers. The Lord's Prayer, for example, is not only introduced as an obligatory formulary, but also functions as one of the Christian *differentia specifica*, distinguishing the Christians' prayer from that of other groups. Thus, the paraenesis connected to the Lord's prayer mandates: not like the hypocrites (Mt 6,5; Did 8,2), not like the pagans who babble and "make many words" (Mt 6,7), and not like the disciples of John the Baptist (Lk 11,1) — the Christians need a prayer of their own!⁸⁰

⁷⁸ E.g., the body-metaphor and the one-bread-motif in the texts mentioned above (n. 69) etc. On the sociological function of homophonic prayer cf. also A. Dohmes, "Die Einstimmigkeit des Kultgesangs als Symbol der Einheit," *Liturgie und Mönchtum* 1 (1948), 67-72.

⁷⁹ Cf. Hippolytus' regulation in *trad. ap.* IV copt. (6f Till/Leipoldt): any bishop may pray according to his ability. "He must only pray strictly in the true faith (ἀρθρόξος)."

⁸⁰ For the distinctive function of hymnody as the borderline between Christians and pagans cf., e.g., PsClement's prohibition for Christians to perform hymns in the presence of pagans: "We celebrate the praise of God with utmost discipline... We do not perform the sacred cult there... we do not sing for gentiles, nor do we read

Although self-definition by prayer may not have been as crucial for pagan antiquity as for Judaism and early Christianity, the phenomenon is none the less present: The *Carmina Saliaria* are different from the *Carmen Arvale*; the Milesian *Molpoi* have songs of their own as do the Pergamenian Hymnodies of Augustus and Roma; the dithyrambs sung by the many associations of Dionysiac *technitai* differed from the paeans performed in the cults of Asclepius and Apollo, and so on.⁸¹ That every group, cult, or religious tradition had their own particular prayer formularies is simply the inevitable result of the fact that a given deity, in every possible situation, required a particular prayer: “Different are the words for conjuration, different for averting, different for confirmations, and we see the highest magistrates begging with particular prayers” (Pliny, *nat. hist.* XXVIII 11).

Therefore, the use of fixed formularies is ultimately based on one motif only: a prayer must be appropriate for the respective deity, for the particular situation, for the praying person, and in its contents. And only the appropriate prayer will produce the intended effect. An inappropriate recitation — with a false formulary, misplaced phrases, or inarticulate pronunciation — is ineffective and even dangerous. Of course, not all the aspects discussed so far apply equally to Greek, Roman, Jewish and Christian prayers. The general description, however, fits them all and the religious mentality is basically the same in all traditions. We can say neither that a formal and predetermined relationship to the deities is characteristic primarily for Roman religion, nor that a personal or emotional interest is typical for the “oriental” Judeo-Christian religious tradition: they all share — not exclusively, but increasingly — since the Hellenistic period the same feeling of

the scriptures for them, in order not to assimilate ourselves to fluteplayers, singers, and soothsayers.” Therefore, a *non licet* is inflicted on singing “songs of the Lord in the foreign country of the gentiles” (PsClem., *epist. de virgin.* II 6,3 ed. F.X. Funk, *Patres Apostolici* II, Tübingen 1901, 20).

⁸¹ This phenomenon is so widespread and natural that it is hardly recognized as a distinct pattern. Some of the relevant material is mentioned above in n. 25f.

personal dependency on the deities who appear to become more and more imposing and majestic.⁸²

III. Authority and Worthiness

The idea that only prayers with the correct wording have the intended effect, and that otherwise they are ineffective and even dangerous, raises a consequential question: how does one come to know whether a particular prayer is appropriate or not? People in antiquity were well aware of the difficulty of choosing the proper words: Paul's statement "We do not know what we should pray" (Rm 8,26) has a number of pagan parallels. In a Simonidean fragment, for example, Danae concludes her prayer to Zeus with the cautious remark: "If the word of my prayer is too fresh or not appropriate, then forgive me!" (fr. 13 D. = 543,25ff *PMG*). A similar uneasiness about finding the appropriate words is expressed in a chorus of Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*: "O Zeus, O Zeus, what am I to say? Wherewith shall I begin my prayer and appeal to the gods? How, in my loyal zeal, can I succeed in finding words to match the need?"⁸³

The difficulty of finding the appropriate words for a prayer is also reflected in the pre-formulated, acknowledged formulary. Not its particular wording is in question, but its origin and authority: how can the claim be substantiated that a particular formulary is appropriate and efficient? A passage from emperor Julian's so-called "Fragment to a Priest" can serve as a guideline, for it combines several of the important aspects in question:

"It is necessary to learn the hymns in honour of the gods by heart: many and beautiful are they, composed by men of old and of our own time. Most of them, though, have been given to us by the gods themselves, in answer to prayer. A few

⁸² Cf. insightful remarks by H.W. Pleket, "Religious History as the History of Mentality: The 'Believer' as Servant of the Deity in the Greek World," in: H.S. Versnel, *Faith* (above, n. 5), 152-192.

⁸³ *Choeph.* 855ff (tr. H.W. Smyth in LCL). This idea is, understandably, the exact counterpart to expecting the appropriate prayer ($\deltaι\alpha\deltaι\kappa\alpha\varsigma$; *Choeph.* 787) to be granted.

have been composed by men, it is true, but then by the aid of divine inspiration and, in honour to the gods, by a soul untouched by evil" (Julian 301d/302a = *ep. 89bis* Bidez; II 297-339 Wright).

A close parallel to this passage is found in Julian's letter to Theodorus, the Highpriest of Asia Minor: "I avoid innovations (*kainotomania*) in all things, so to speak, but more peculiarly in what concerns the gods. For I hold that we ought to observe the laws that we have inherited from our forefathers, since it is evident that the *gods gave them to us*. For they would not be as perfect as they are if they had been derived from mere men" (453b = *ep. 20* II 58f Wright).

We have already noted that praying by heart was considered appropriate and even superior when reciting a prayer formulary.⁸⁴ More interesting is what Julian has to say about the authorization of prayers.

"Composed by men of old...": the Age of Prayers

An initial consideration for this problem lies in the advanced age of prayers, often going back, as stated, to prehistoric, mythical times. A long standing tradition and an unidentifiable origin often proves sufficient legitimacy and authority.

As for the Greek hymnography, a reference to Orpheus, Musaeus, and Eumolpus will suffice: the famous collection of 87 Orphic hymns, originating probably from the Roman Imperial period, is attributed to Orpheus, the *archegetes* of music *par excellence*, who is said to have descended from Apollo himself. This is clearly a statement of inspiration.⁸⁵ Similarly, numerous hymns are attributed to Orpheus' disciple, Musaeus, to whom the Orphic hymns are addressed and whose identity is closely connected to the Muses. And Musaeus' son, by the name Eumolpus ("Well-singer"), is believed to have instituted the Eleusinian mysteries, including the institution of their hymns. This hymnodic genealogy does not only place the origin of Greek hymnology to mythic times, it also provides a direct link back

⁸⁴ E.g., Tertullian, *apol.* 30,4; Eusebius, *VitaConst.* 19f; Clement of Alexandria, *strom.* VI 35,3; Script. hist. Aug., *M. Antoninus* IV 4 etc.

⁸⁵ Cf. Pindar, *Pyth.* 4,313; Hesiod (*theog.* 94) says the same about singers and citharoedoes. Interestingly, *Orph. hym.* 1 is somewhat a "model-hymn", containing the names of most of the deities invoked by the following hymns.

to Apollo. Similarly, the Athenian and Delian hymns are traced back to the mythic, pre-Homeric hymnographers Pamphos and Olen.⁸⁶ In Rome, the most famous prayers of ancient times are the *Carmina Salaria*. The *collegium Saliorum* is said to have been founded by Numa Pompilius,⁸⁷ who is also seen as the poet of their hymns.⁸⁸ And in Judaism the titles of the psalms are attributed to the heroes of ancient times, such as King David, the Qorachites, and so on. Subsequent reflections on David's authorship of the psalms show clearly that their advanced age served as an argument for their authority and appropriateness.⁸⁹ And later, during the Rabbinic period, many formularies — foremost of the statutory prayers — were attributed to the ancestors of ancient times as well.⁹⁰

“... have been given to us by the gods themselves”: Prayer Revelation

However, the advanced age of religious institutions, often used apologetically,⁹¹ was only a subordinate argument for the authority and appropriateness of prayer formularies: as already mentioned earlier, it was the divine origin of the prayers which legitimized their authority. The function of the mythological ancestors within this context was, therefore, not to create prayers, but rather to serve as a link between the gods and later generations. They did not invent the prayers, but they received them and handed them down.⁹² It is, ultimately, the divine origin of the prayer formularies which warrants

⁸⁶ Pausanias I 38,3; VIII 37,9; IX 27,2; Herodot IV 35,3.

⁸⁷ Plutarch, *Numa* 13,1; Dionysius of Halic. II 70,1; III 32,4 etc.

⁸⁸ Livy I 20,4; Varro, *ling. lat.* VII 3; Cicero, *orat.* III 197; Ovid, *fast.* 8,387; Horace, *ep.* II 1,86 etc.

⁸⁹ Cf., e.g., *11QPs^a* (DavComp) XVII 4ff. (IV 92 DJD).

⁹⁰ E.g., Moses (*pBer* 7 [11c]); the Patriarchs (*bBer* 26b); elders and prophets (*bMeg* 17b; *pBer* 2 [4d] 4); the “Great Assembly” (*bBer* 33a); or bluntly “the early generations of pious men” (*MidrTeh* 17,4.17) etc. Cf. Heinemann, *Prayer* (above, n. 31), 13ff.

⁹¹ Cf. P. Pilhofer, *Presbyteron Kreitton* (WUNT II/39), Tübingen 1990.

⁹² Cf. H. Roloff, *Maiores bei Cicero*, Göttingen 1938, 109: “Die Tätigkeit der *maiores* ist hier... nicht das Instituieren, sondern das Pflegen und Tradieren. Denn

their authority and their effectiveness, a concept which can be summarized by the key word prayer-revelation.

A Greek example for the idea that the wording of a prayer originates of divine revelation is expressed in an oracle found in Didyma:

A certain Damianus, prophet of Apollo Didymeus, asks the Didymaean oracle for permission to institute a cult for *Soteira Kore* which essentially means that he wants to erect an altar for her.⁹³ After Apollo granted this permission, Damianus goes on and “asks you to ordain her auspicious and hymnal epithet (τῆς εὐφήμου καὶ ὑμνικῆς εἰς αὐτὴν προσαγορεύσεως αὐτόν σε νομοθέτην γενέσθαι, *I.* 25-28).” The god’s reply is given in two hexametric lines: “Let us with holy cries call *Soteira Meilichos* to meet always with mother Deo.”⁹⁴ This answer is more than simply Apollo’s assent to Damianus’ request to serve as *nomothetes*; it also contains the most important part of his *nomothesia*: the institution of the hymn. Of course, these two lines do not constitute the entire hymn. The oracle’s answer, instead, prescribes the critical invocations and the most important epithets, thus functioning as a canon or model for the hymn’s composition.⁹⁵

In this case, the god exposes merely a rough draft or a model for the hymnography. A complete hymn, however, is revealed to Abraham in *ApcAbr* 17. The archangel Jaoel, who raptured Abraham into heaven, imparts a hymn to him and calls upon him to recite it when meeting God: “Only worship, Abraham, and recite the song which I taught you’ (...) And I recited the song which he had taught me. And he

die Götter selbst haben die *religio* geschaffen... Die Formen der Götterverehrung sind... den *maiores* von den Göttern selbst übergeben worden, die *maiores* haben dann die Einzelheiten der Kulte festgesetzt.”

⁹³ *I. Didyma* 504,1-16 (ed. A. Rehm, R. Harder, *Didyma II: Die Inschriften*, Berlin 1958); Kore is Apollo’s “holiest sister” (*I.* 5f); the altar is to be erected next to the one of her mother, Demeter Karpophoros.

⁹⁴ *I. Didyma* 504,29-31; cf. O. Weinreich, “*Hymnologica*,” *ARW* 17 (1914), 524-531; 524ff; J. Fontenrose, *Didyma*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1988, 205.

⁹⁵ Assuming that the institution of a cult usually institutionalized hymns and prayers as well, our discussion on prayer revelation may also include the many references of instituting cults, such as in dreams (Menander, *Dysk.* 407ff; *LSAM* 20: Philadelphia/Lydia etc.) or through oracles (e.g., the altar of Poseidon: *I. Milet* I 6,191 ed. T. Wiegand, *Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen seit dem Jahr 1899*, Berlin 1906 = *SEG* 1, 427; Apollonius, *Arg.* I 958-960) etc.

said, ‘Recite without ceasing!’ And I recited and he himself recited the song with me...” (the text of the hymn follows).⁹⁶ Jaoel is able to reveal the hymn to Abraham, because it was first given to him by God and is part of his “angelic nature”⁹⁷ — God acts through his mediator.

Although the idea of an angel mediating prayers is present in Christianity too,⁹⁸ the majority of the references sees Jesus as the one, critical mediator of prayer. His teaching the Lord’s Prayer clearly falls into the category of revelation, and the same would be true for the eucharistic prayers. In the eucharistic prayers of the *Didache*, the crucial line, “which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant”,⁹⁹ most probably refers to this exact prayer revelation. The prayers reflect on their own origin and “revelation”, although it remains unclear when and where this revelation might have happened.

⁹⁶ *ApcAbr* 17,4-7 (tr. R. Rubiniewicz in *OTP* I). The hymn itself begins with numerous invocations. One line of the invocations (17,11b: “El, El, El, El, Jaoel”) resembles the magic spells; L. Kropf (*Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* II, Brüssel 1931, 169) has provided the closest analogies.

⁹⁷ Cf. 18,9: Jaoel “taught them (i.e. the *ophanîm*) the song of peace which was within him from the Lord” (as in the majority of manuscripts). It is not surprising that Jaoel is nearly identified with God (who is addressed in the hymn as “Jaoel”): The idea of a (partial) identity of God and his archangel goes back to Ex 23,21 (“My name is within him!”), cf. the role of Metatron in *3En*(hebr) or of Michael in *TestAbr*.

⁹⁸ Examples include emperor Constantine who is called a “teacher of prayer,” because he taught his soldiers the supplicatory prayer before the battle (Eusebius, *vit. Const.* 19; see above, n. 10) or Licinius to whom an angel appeared revealing the precise wording of the prayer (Lact., *mort. persec.* 46,6; 226 Brandt-Laumann).

⁹⁹ Did 9,2f.; 10,2 (and 10,8 copt.): ἡς ἐγνώρισας ἡμῖν διὰ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ παιδός σου. The phrase does not refer to the actual meal (wine, bread), but to the spiritual gifts: The holy grapevine of David (9,2); life and knowledge (9,3); knowledge, faith, and immortality (10,2). The “natural elements” — or, more precisely: the whole meal — gains its spiritual quality when eaten in the setting of the eucharist, i.e. when the agenda’s prayers were recited: they had the critical function of warranting the spiritual effect. Understandably, prayers of such importance were traced back to Jesus (cf. Klinghardt, *op. cit.* n. 23, 441ff.).

With respect to this authorization, it is clear that Julian “avoids innovations... in what concerns the gods.” The prohibition against changing what was given by the gods and inherited by the forefathers is corroborated by the role the *maiores* played in Roman religion (cf. n. 92) or by Quintilian’s judgment about the *Carmina Salaria*: although they are hardly comprehensible by their own priests, “*religio* prohibits any changes and the sacred formularies must be used” (*inst. I* 6,40f).

“Composed... by the aid of divine inspiration”

The idea of a direct revelation of prayers by way of dreams or oracles is relatively rare, however. More often, the divine origin of prayers is guaranteed by the concept of the poet’s inspiration. For the Greek world it will suffice to refer to the Muses: since Homer, poets are frequently inspired and initiated by Muses or by Graces,¹⁰⁰ and the concept of divine inspiration may very well have accounted for the numerous decrees honoring poets and hymnographers. The Jewish counterpart to the inspiration by the Muses is, of course, the pneumatic inspiration. The most famous example is probably the gift of the spirit to Job, to his friends, and to his daughters according to *Testamentum Jobi* 43ff:

The spirit enables Job’s prophecy and inspires his friend Eliphaz to sing a hymn (43,1) to which the others respond.¹⁰¹ The inspiration of Job’s daughters makes

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Hesiod, *theog.* 1-115 (!); Virgil, *ecl.* 10,54; Propertius, *eleg.* III 5,20; Theocritus, *id.* V 92. A legendary description of Archilochus’ initiation by the Muses is described on the so-called Archilochus-inscription, cf. W. Peek, “Neues von Archilochos,” *Phil.* 99 (1955), 4-50 (text of the inscription: 6-12). The functional analogy between Muses, Graces, and even nymphs can be seen by frequent descriptions of the initiation as the poet’s integration into their chorus and dance, e.g., Archilochus (ed. Peek) or Hermas’ dance with the virgins in *PastHerm*, sim. IX 13,1ff, cf. O. Luschnat, “Die Jungfrauenszene in der Arkadienvision des Hermas,” *ThViat* 12 [1973/74], 53-70; R. Deichgräber, *Charis und Chariten — Grazie und Grazien*, München 1971.

¹⁰¹ *TestJob* 44,1: ἐπιφωνεῖν. This is technical terminology, cf. 2Makk 1,23-30; *TestJob* 31,8; Jud 15,14.

them “sing songs like the songs of the angels” (48,3), they take over the “voices of the *archai*” (49,2), and speak in the “language of the Cherubim” (50,2).¹⁰² After their singing the spirit inscribes the hymns on steles, thus making them available for future (liturgical) use,¹⁰³ which clearly establishes an authorization of these prayers, although their wording is lost.

Similarly, Philo describes the hymnody of the *Therapeutae*: Their song is god-inspired (*vit. cont.* 84), enthusiastic (87), and the singers appear to be in a state of “beautiful drunkenness” (89): in Hellenistic antiquity the oxymoron “sober drunkenness”, the *sobria ebrietas*, is a common metaphor for divine inspiration.¹⁰⁴ Interestingly, Philo compares the *Therapeutae*’s inspired hymnody to the song from Ex 15 (*vit. cont.* 86-88): in Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaism this was the *locus classicus* for the proof of collective inspiration. There are several attempts to extend the pneumatic inspiration for hymnody from the prophets (Moses and Miriam) to all people¹⁰⁵ which, in one case, authorizes a new hymn.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Praying with *voices angelicae* also in *TestAbr* 15,7; *AsclIsa* 7,13ff; 8,17; *4Q400*, fr. 2,4; *Mas. ShirShab* II 23,25; *4Q403* fr. 1, col. I, 11,26.40; *bbb* 134a; *bSukka* 28a; *bSota* 33a etc.

¹⁰³ Inscription of hymns on stone is not only attested in Greek hymnography, but also in Judaism; the “Steles of Seth” was a familiar topos (Josephus, *ant.* I 70f.; *NHC* VII 118,10f.32ff; 121,18; 124,14ff). Cf. also *PGM* IV 1115 (στήλη ἀπόκρυφος; IV 1167 (“Stele, useful for everything, even saves from death”); V 96 (“Stele of Ieou, the writer of hieroglyphs”).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. the classical, yet unexcelled study by H. Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas* (BZNW 9), Gießen 1929. A typical example is Cyprian, *ad Donat.* 16 (III/1, 16 Hartel): “sonet psalmos convivium sobrium.”

¹⁰⁵ *MekhRJ* II (*bešallaḥ* 6 (115 Horovitz-Rabin), combining Ex 14,31 with 15,1: “By the merit of their faith the spirit rested upon them and they sang the song, as it is said: ‘and they believed...’ (Ex 14,31)” (cf. also *ibid.*, III [*širah*] 10, 152 Hor.-Rab. on Moses and Miriam); *MekhRSh* Ex 14,31 (70 Epstein-Melamed: He who fulfills only one of the commands, he is worthy that the holy spirit rests upon him and he sings a song). This tradition by R. Nehemia has a parallel in *Sota* V 4 and *pSota* 5 (20c) 6: R. Nehemiah obviously suggested that all Israelites were inspired for hymnody. For a detailed discussion cf. E. Grözinger, *Musik* (above, n. 31), 99ff.

¹⁰⁶ *4Q364f*: Together with a paraphrase of Ex 15 this midrashic fragment contains several lines of a hymn which appear to be an interpretative *relecture* of

It seems, at this point, not necessary to go into great detail about NT references¹⁰⁷ or specifics about early Christian *glossolalia*,¹⁰⁸ and it might not even be wise to touch the vast field of early Christian hymnody.¹⁰⁹ The concept of inspiration has become sufficiently clear: hymns and prayers (and the formularies thereof) are effective by their divine origin. A person cannot say a prayer on his own merit, but can only return to God what had been received previously from God. Or, as expressed in a prayer of the *Corpus Hermeticum*: “It is *your* word, that praises you *through me*. Accept *through me* the whole, reasonable service in the word” (*CH XIII 18*).¹¹⁰ This idea appears elsewhere in Jewish and early Christian sources. Abraham, for example, concludes his hymn requesting that God may accept his prayer and sacrifice “which *you yourself made to yourself through me*.¹¹¹ Therefore, in prayer man “*returns* to the Lord the riches which he *received from the Lord*” (*PastHerm*, sim. II 7). Most intriguing is Tertullian’s application of this concept to the hymnody of the canonical psalms. Since the psalms are composed by David, it is not merely the congregation who

Miriam’s song, cf. G.J. Brooke, “A Long-Lost Song of Miriam,” *BAR* 20 (1994), 62-65; S.A. White, “4Q364 and 365: A Preliminary Report,” in: J. Trebolle Barrera, L. Vegas Montaner (eds.), *The Madrid Qumran Congress* (STDJ 11), Leiden/Madrid 1992, 222-224.

¹⁰⁷ E.g., 1Cor 12,18ff., Col 3,12-17, and Eph 5,18-21; next to the commentaries cf. the two studies by M. Hengel, above n. 33.

¹⁰⁸ Still valuable: G. Dautzenberg, *Urchristliche Prophetie* (BWANT 104), Stuttgart 1975, and *idem*, Art. “*Glossolalie*,” *RAC IX*, Stuttgart 1976, 225-246.

¹⁰⁹ For which a comprehensive study is still a desideratum: Since J. Kroll, *Die christliche Hymnodik bis zu Clemens von Alexandria*, 1921/22 (= repr. Darmstadt 1968), no thorough monograph has been published. It is, however, worthwhile to refer to Hermas’ dance with the virgins (*PastHerm*, sim. IX 13, above, n. 100), which obviously adapts the concept of the inspiration by the Muses: Hermas identifies the virgins as “holy spirits” and (divine) “powers” (sim. IX 13,1. 8); and the pleasure he gains from being with them is caused by his “eating words of the Lord” (11,8).

¹¹⁰ Cf. G. Zuntz, “On the Hymns in *Corpus Hermeticum XIII*,” *Hermes* 83 (1955), 68-92.

¹¹¹ *ApcAbr* 17,20; cf. also: *Jub* 25,14ff; *IQH* IX 10f; XI 4f; XVI 11; XVII 17; *4Q504* (DibHam^a) 1/2 *recto* V 15f (VII 145 *DJD*); *IIQPs*^a (DavComp) XVII 4f.11.

recites them, but actually the prophet David. But because David's authorship of the psalms is, within the framework of a christological interpretation, seen as the result of his inspiration, their wording is traced back to Christ himself. Ultimately, it is Christ as the inspiring source who sings — through David (and the congregation) — to himself. Obviously, this concept is meant to guarantee the psalms' spiritual quality and, therefore, their suitability for the Christians' spiritual hymnody.

“A soul, untouched by evil...”: Worthiness and Exclusion

This concept of pneumatic prayer has a number of consequences with regard to the praying person. It is clear that prayers derived from the divine sphere and cyclically returned to it cannot leave the praying person unaffected. The matter is quite simple: the inspiration of an individual prayer, i.e. a free prayer which does not follow a fixed formulary, is deemed a dignification of the praying person. In Jewish and Christian contexts it is usually a concept of election: not everyone is worthy, for example, to learn a heavenly hymn by an archangel, but only the chosen few, like Abraham (ApcAbr 14,1); nor can everybody cry out to God “Abba!”, but only the Christians, as the elected sons of God represented by the spirit (Rm 8,15f.26ff.). And the composition of prayers in pagan tradition would require some pre-disposition as well. That only “a soul untouched by evil” — as Julian says — receives the aid of divine inspiration for hymnography has a parallel in the classical concept of inspiration by the Muses: the picture of incorporating the initiate or hymnographer into the choruses of the Muses or Graces implies moral requirements, too, since these divine personifications are often paralleled to the chorus of the Virtues.¹¹² According to Jewish texts, divine inspiration requires the “merit of faith” or righteousness (above, n. 105).

At first glance, the situation seems to be different with regard to pre-formulated, fixed prayers, since a given formulary would allow

¹¹² For the relevant material cf. Klinghardt, *op. cit.* (n. 23) 206ff.

for anybody to join in and participate in its pneumatic quality. A closer look, however, reveals certain restrictions, although the references are far from being complete. I begin with a couple of Christian references about liberties on improvising prayers. Although early Christian church orders prescribe the adherence to fixed formularies, exceptions are sometimes granted under certain conditions:

Following the obligatory formularies for the prayers before and after the communal meal, Did 10,7 concedes: "But give permission to the prophets to give thanks as much as they want!" In the light of Did 11,7 — the "prophet speaks in the spirit" — it is this spiritual quality that allows the prophet's free prayer and marks the difference from other functionaries who all must adhere to the formulary. The agenda still indicates the place where these extensions might have occurred: in 10,6 the crucial expressions "The grace may come, the world shall pass" and "Hosianna to the God of David" are most likely not part of a liturgical dialogue, but possibly a model or canon for the hymnology following the prayer proper (10,1-5), thus resembling the Didymaeon oracle response mentioned earlier.¹¹³

Similarly, Hippolytus gives permission to the bishop to deviate from the pre-formulated prayer. After presenting the prayer formulary for the ordination of confessors, he writes: "When the bishop recites the thanksgiving prayer, as we have it said earlier (i.e. within the regulations for the eucharist at the occasion of the bishop's ordination), then there is no necessity (ἀνάγκη) for him to recite the very same words which we have written above, as if reciting the thanksgiving by heart (ἀπόστηθος). But everybody shall pray according to his ability. If he can appropriately pray a solemn prayer, he is good. If he furthermore prays appropriately, do not hinder him. Only, he must strictly pray in the true belief (δρθόδοξος)."¹¹⁴ The formulary is, again, seen as a mere paradigm, showing the direction of the prayer. The bishop's ability to formulate a free, yet appropriate prayer does not imply an intellectual but a spiritual quality: it is the bishop's "highpriestly spirit" that enables him to offer "the scent of sweetness (*odor suavitatis*) through your servant Jesus Christ" (*trad. ap.* 3,10,7ff Botte), which means, of course, that his prayer reaches God.

The only condition under which expansions of (or even deviations from) fixed formularies are granted is, therefore, a spiritual

¹¹³ *I. Didyma* 504,29-31 (above, n. 94). For a thorough discussion of Did 10,6 and a reconstruction of the meal of the *Didache* see Klinghardt, *ibid.* 379ff.

¹¹⁴ Hippolytus, *trad. ap.* 9 (28 Botte).

dynamis.¹¹⁵ And it may be this kind of spiritual quality to which the praise of emperor Marcus refers: at first glance, one is tempted to understand his ability to recite the *Carmina Saliaria* by heart at the age of only eight years as a proof of his outstanding intellect, since these prayers are notoriously complicated.¹¹⁶ There is probably more to it: the *Carmen Arvale*, e.g., is by no means too complicated to be learned by heart; the formulary contains but five short lines (each to be repeated three times), concluded by a fivefold *triumpe*!¹¹⁷ Although the recitation of this *carmen* would certainly not exceed a regular person's intellectual capability, the priests read it from the *libelli*. And they read in seclusion, with nobody else present: only the priests (*sacerdotes*) are allowed to recite the prayer, for only they meet the necessary spiritual or ritual qualifications. The fact that the

¹¹⁵ Cf. also Justin, *Iap* 67,5: "Likewise shall the president send up prayers and thanksgivings, as far as he has the power (δύναμις), and the people shall respond, saying 'Amen'." According to *CorpHerm* XIII 18, it is the divine powers that pray: "You powers (δυνάμεις) within me, sing the One and the All! All you powers (δυνάμεις) within me, sing together with my will" (cf. R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, Leipzig 1904, 55f).

¹¹⁶ Script. Hist. Aug. (Iul. Capitolinus), *M. Antoninus* IV 4 (II 140 Magie; above, n. 11). That the *carmina Saliaria* were not comprehensible even for their own priests (Quint., *inst.* I 6,40f, above) is a widely accepted judgment, cf. Symmachus, *ep.* III 44 or Ter. Scaurus who suggests a taste: "cuine ponas Leucesiae praetexere monti quot ibet etinei deis cum tonarem" (*orthogr.* 28,11 ed. H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini* VI, Leipzig 1880). Further examples are provided by Varro, *ling. lat.* VII 26f; R.G. Kent, the translator of the LCL-edition, explains in his annotation *ad locum* (vol. I, 298, note e): "It is hazardous in the extreme to attempt to restore and interpret the text of the Hymn." It is, indeed, if one tries: "cozeul odorieso amnia vero ad patula coemisse ian cusianes duonus cerus es dunus ianus ueuet pomelios eum recum." The *varia lectio* of cod. Florentinus is of no help either: "cozolendorieso. omia uo adpatula coemisseian cusianes duonus ceruses. dun; ianusie uet pomelios eum recum."

¹¹⁷ In the records of 218 CE (167, *ll.* 32-38 Pasoli, no. 88): *enos Lases iuuate — neue lue rue Marmor sins incurrere in pleores — satur fu, fere Mars, limen sali, sta berber — Semunis alternei aduocapit concos — enos Marmor iuuato — triumpe*. Although modern interpreters understand the *Carmen Arvale* only with great difficulty (cf. Tanner; Norden, *Priesterbücher*, both above, n. 17), it is not too complicated to learn it by heart.

recitation even of approved and acknowledged formularies is not open to anybody, but restricted to certain groups is well illustrated by an incident reported by Josephus in 64 CE: Agrippa II. granted illegitimate privileges to the Levites; the upper class of them (the “singers”) was allowed to wear linen robes (which implies they were put on equal terms with the priests), and another part of them was granted permission “to learn the hymns by heart (τοὺς ὑμνους ἐκμαθεῖν)” (*ant. XX* 216-18). Josephus considers both permissions as illegitimate transgressions of ancestral customs which make liable for punishment.¹¹⁸

The phenomenon that praying according to particular formularies requires certain prerequisites has two important implications. First, it is clear that everybody who does not meet those prerequisites is excluded from participating in the prayer. Although references of a direct exclusion of certain groups from prayer are relatively rare,¹¹⁹ that phenomenon is well-known: the often reported exclusion from certain sacral rites, festivals, and sacrifices implies, of course, also the exclusion from the prayers recited at these occasions. By the headword of “*exesto! extra eos!*”, Paulus-Festus mentions the groups most commonly excluded: enemies, prisoners, women, and virgins.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ For the division of two classes of Levites cf. *Ezr* 2,41f.; 7,7; 10,24; *Neh* 10,28. According to *bAr* 11b, a “singing Levite” who did his colleague’s work “at the gate” incurs the death penalty. Since the *hymnodoi* belong to the lower class of Levites, the incident implies that this group wanted their hymnody to be independent from certain situations and access to hymn-books; cf. R. Meyer, “Levitische Emanzipationsbestrebungen in nachexilischer Zeit,” *OrLZ* 41 (1938), 721-28.

¹¹⁹ A famous, though untypical example is reported by Suetonius: after a bad omen, Claudius performed a public supplication ceremony where he prompted the prayer formulary for the people (*iure maximi pontificis pro rostris populo paeiret*). He did so, however, only after he had excluded all “the crowds of craftsmen and slaves (*summotaque operariorum servorumque turba*)” (*Suet.*, *div. Claud.* 22; cf. *Zosimus, hist.* II 5,1).

¹²⁰ Paulus-Festus *s.v. exesto! extra eos* (72 Lindsay). For the exclusion of slaves and women cf., e.g., Plutarch, *QuGraec* 40 (301e/f: exclusion of women from the shrine and grove of Eunostus in Tanagra; of slaves from the cult of Poseidon in Aegina). — Female slaves: Plutarch, *QuRom* 16 (267d: shrine of Matuta); Plutarch (*ibid.*) reports about the sanctuary of Leucothea in his native town, Chaeroneia, that

Interestingly, these exclusions cannot be attributed to one common religious concept, e.g., a general religious inferiority of one of those groups.¹²¹ Instead, the exclusion of certain groups from sacral rites reflects the appropriateness for only the selected to engage in religious activity — with the implication that appropriate prayer is similarly restricted.¹²²

Arcane Discipline: the Necessity of Secrecy

More important than exclusion from (rites and) prayers is, however, the requirement not to publish prayer formularies and to keep them secret. The so-called arcane discipline is well-known from mystery cults, relating it to all kinds of rites, initiations, *hieroi logoi* etc. It does not surprise that the *symbola*, the formularies for the prayers usually recited during the initiation ceremonies, ranked high among the topics safeguarded by arcane discipline¹²³ — a close analogy to Christian practice: since the *Didache* (9,5; 10,6b) only the baptized were admitted to the eucharist; this development was first mentioned

the temple-guardian, a whip in his hand, proclaimed: “Let no slave enter, nor any Aetolian, man or woman!” — Aeschines I 183 (slaves). — Servius, *Aen.* VIII 179 (*in sacris enim Herculis nec servi intererant nec liberti*). etc. That women and slaves in particular were among the excluded groups is also evident from their explicit admission, e.g., in the private cult in Philadelphia/Lydia (LSAM 20) etc. On the other hand, the exclusive participation of free women in the Thesmophoria (e.g., Aristophanes, *Thesm.* 294; 330; Isaeus VI 50 etc.) implies the exclusion of men and slaves of either sex.

¹²¹ For slaves cf. the extensive remarks by F. Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom IV, AAWLM.G* Wiesbaden-Mainz 1964, 856-1144: 937-56 (= 81-100).

¹²² For Judaism, cf. the regulations about the responsibility of reciting the daily benedictions, *Ber* III 3: women, children, and slaves are free from the obligation to recite the *šema'*, but not from the *tefillah* and the grace after dinner.

¹²³ For references cf. O. Perler, Art. “*Arkandisziplin*,” *RAC* I, Stuttgart 1950, 667-676. O. Casel, *De philosophorum Graecorum silentio mystico* (RGVV 16/2), Gießen 1919, 6ff. has collected Greek examples where the sacred rites and formularies were illegitimately divulged.

by Hippolytus¹²⁴ and later found its formal expression in the separation of the *missa catechumenorum* from the *missa fidelium*. Time and again, the basic rationale for this exclusion was to safeguard the prayer formularies from profanation by the unworthy.¹²⁵

Exclusion from, and concealment of, prayer formularies was, however, not restricted to mystery cults and Christian congregations, but appeared commonly in the ancient world. And the religious awe, interestingly, was primarily related to the name(s) of the gods, since knowledge of the divine name was the necessary prerequisite to address a deity. Thus, the name itself bore a magic quality and had to be kept secret. In Judaism, the revelation of the name of God to Moses according to Ex 3,14ff was interpreted in exactly these magic categories: both Philo (*vit. Mos.* II 114) and Josephus (*ant.* II 226) are reluctant to tell the name, they rather circumscribe it. As Artapanus points out,¹²⁶ it is a dangerous power and, therefore, it is revealed only to very few people and otherwise must remain secret.¹²⁷ Again, the magic understanding of the divine name — and the necessity to keep

¹²⁴ *trad. ap.* 21 (58 Botte) about the eucharist within the setting of baptism: “The unbelievers, however, shall have no knowledge of this, unless they are baptized first.”

¹²⁵ Hippolytus, *trad. ap.* 21 (56 Botte): only after their baptism are the initiants allowed “to pray together with the whole people. For they may pray together with the believers only after they have received all this.” See also F. J. Dölger, “Das erste Gebet der Gläubigen in der Gemeinschaft der Brüder,” *AuC* 2 (1930), 142-155. The same idea is true for the Lord’s Prayer, though, cf.: Tertullian, *bapt.* 20; Cyprian, *or. domin.* 10; Cyril of Jerusalem, *cat.* 23,11-18; *ConstApost* VII 44,45 etc.

¹²⁶ Artapanus, *fr.* 3 (Eusebius, *praep. Ev.* IX 27,24ff): Moses whispers God’s name into Pharaoh’s ear (who had made fun of it before), and the king loses consciousness. An Egyptian priest dies in spasms after he had ridiculed Moses’ writing the name on a tablet. Clement of Alexandria reports that Moses killed the Egyptian in Ex 2,14 not by hitting him, but “only by a word” (*strom.* I 154,1); this tradition also in *ExR* on 2,14 where the “word” is explicitly the name of God. In Rabbinic Judaism, there is a rich tradition about things to be concealed (cf. G. A. Wewers, *Geheimnis und Geheimhaltung im rabbinischen Judentum*, RGVV 35, Berlin/New York 1975); it does, however, relate to the teaching of the Torah and the “works of the merkabah” rather than to prayer formularies, although they are an important part of the latter.

¹²⁷ Cf. the magic papyri: *PGM* II 126-128 (Moses speaking: “I am he who met you, and you gave to me as a gift the knowledge of your greatest name...”); similarly

it concealed — is not peculiar to oriental religions (or to Egyptian syncretism in particular), it was present in Roman religion as well, for which the evocation of the tutelary gods and the secret name of Rome are prominent examples:

Pliny reports the Roman belief that a (foreign) city could only be conquered, if the respective tutelary gods were called out from it first in a sacral ceremony, the *evocatio*: “It was customary for the Roman priests in besieging a foreign city to call out the god under whose guard the respective city was and to promise him an even greater cult by the Romans. This sacral rite (*sacrum*) is preserved in the lore of the priests (*durat in pontificum disciplina*), and it is well known that Rome’s guardianship was concealed to prevent enemies from acting similarly” (*nat. hist.* XXVIII 18). This custom is attested by other authors as well; Macrobius even reveals the wording of the *carmen evocationis* which was used in besieging Carthago.¹²⁸

In a similar way Rome herself had a secret name, the *nomen alterum Romae*, which was to be kept in secret in order to prevent magical misuse.¹²⁹ A famous case of disclosure is reported for the year 82 BCE when Valerius Soranus, a partisan of Marius, divulged this *nomen alterum* (or, more precisely,

PGM III 158f (“I am he who you encountered and to whom you granted knowledge of your greatest name of its sacred pronunciation [ἐκφώνησις λερά!]. . .”). In *PGM* III 444 Moses’ name shows up next to Abraxas, Iao, and Sabaoth. Of particular interest is *PGM* V 108-118 where the praying voice is directly identified with Moses (according to Ex 3,14ff): “I am Moses, your prophet, to whom you committed your mysteries which are celebrated by Israel. . . Listen to me! I am the messenger of Phapro Osoronnophris. This is your authentic name which was committed to the prophets of Israel!” Having knowledge of the name of God enables Moses to force him to listen. Furthermore, see the title of *PGM* XIII (“Eighth Book of Moses concerning the Holy Name;” cf. XIII 731: “Secret Book of Moses concerning the Great Name”). Cf. R. Reitzenstein, *Poinandres* (above, n. 115), 293 n. 1; J.G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (SBLMS 16), Nashville 1972, 142ff.

¹²⁸ E.g.: Servius, *Aen.* II 251. — Plutarch, *QuRom* 61 (278f/279a) mentions the same and concludes that “the Romans believed that not to mention and not to know the name of a god was the safest and surest way of shielding it.” — Macrobius, *sat.* III 9,2f (9,6ff: the formulary used in the Carthaginian siege). — A closely related phenomenon is the prohibited evocation of the goddess *Tutilina* (Pliny, *nat. hist.* XVIII 8). On the whole problem see Th. Köves-Zulauf, *op. cit.* n. 43, 85ff, for the *nomen alterum* cf. A. Brelich, *Die geheime Schutzgottheit Roms*, Zürich 1948.

¹²⁹ Pliny, *nat. hist.* III 65; cf. Servius, *Georg.* I 498.

what he considered this name to be) and, therefore, was crucified on Pompeius' instigation.¹³⁰

It would seem inappropriate to regard the priestly evocation as a legitimate act of religion distinct from the mere magical devotion for the *nomen alterum* (or the prohibited evocation of *Tutilina*),¹³¹ since both instances represent the same concept of the magic power of the divine name which must be kept in secret.¹³² More important is the hint that the divine names were part of the *disciplina pontificum* (as it is the case for the *nomen alterum*) or that they were pronounced *certo carmine* (Macr. *sat.* III 9,2f) by priests in *arcana caeremonia* (Pliny, *nat. hist.* III 65): this terminology is typical for the *libri pontificum* containing the formularies of prayers and, most importantly, the *indigitamenta*. The debate over whether the *indigitamenta* contained complete prayer formularies or whether they merely listed the names of the deities¹³³ is secondary here: since many prayers and hymns consisted largely of invocations (with the deities' proper names and epithets), the knowledge of how to address them properly is critical¹³⁴

¹³⁰ For the historical and political background of this case see C. Cichorius, "Zur Lebensgeschichte des Valerius Soranus," *Hermes* 41 (1906), 59ff, for the religious implications and problems cf. Köves-Zulauf, *op. cit.* n. 45, 95ff.

¹³¹ As Köves-Zulauf, *ibid.* 102ff. would have it.

¹³² The similarity between the devotion of the *nomen alterum Romae* and the evocation of tutelary deities is indicated by Plutarch (*QuRom* 61) and Servius (*Georg.* I 498): they understand Soranus' fault as divulging the name of a goddess *Roma* (as opposed to the city's *nomen alterum*); and, reversely, Macrobius combines the *nomen alterum* with the concept of the evocation (*sat.* III 9,5ff). The ancient authors did not confuse different concepts erroneously; instead, the underlying concept of the divine *nomen* and its power is all the same.

¹³³ Cf. H. Usener, *Götternamen*, Bonn 1896, 74ff; Wissowa (n. 45), 37 with n. 3; and Rohde (n. 14), 19 etc.

¹³⁴ Cf. the Didymaean oracle response (*I. Didyma* 504, 29ff; above, n. 94). Anyway, the *indigitamenta* were obviously part of the secret *libri pontificum*, cf. Cicero, *nat. deor.* I 84f; Servius, *Georg.* I 21 etc.

and in many cases restricted to the priests for sacral rites only.¹³⁵

However, a contradiction remains: On the one hand, the *indigita-menta* were part of the *libri pontificum*, accessible only to the priests and concealed otherwise. On the other hand, the respective prayers were usually recited in public, suggesting the possibility of knowing and divulging them. The acts of the *Frates Arvales* show an extreme form of this paradox: the fact that the text of the *carmen Arvale* was publicly accessible (in the records of the year 218 CE),¹³⁶ did in no way invalidate the sacral restrictions relating to its performance: only by the priests, only in seclusion, and only after the ceremonial handing over of the text. It is exactly this antagonism between public knowledge and secrecy which made Cicero's speech a tricky enterprise when he spoke before the *collegium pontificum* on behalf of his own house: Cicero's argument — that Clodius has made mistakes in the dedicatory ceremony, and has mispronounced the formulary — presupposes his own knowledge of the details of these sacral rites. Cicero is well aware of the problem and, therefore, cautiously guards his argument: "I will not withhold that I do not know what I, if I knew it, would conceal in order not to sound pedantic to others, and to you even interfering; though it is true that many details of your lore leak out and thus often come to my attention. I think I have heard it said..." (*dom. 121*). Although Cicero clearly knows the formulary, he must rely on hearsay,¹³⁷ because he cannot divulge his knowledge. In a similar way, Pliny concludes the long section on prayers and the magic power of the word: "Only an immense timidity hinders (*obstat ingens verecundia*) to tell more..." (*nat. hist. XXVIII 29*).

¹³⁵ Cf. the Byzantine Joh. Laurentius Lydus, *mens.* IV 73 (125 W.): "τὸ δὲ τελεστικὸν (sc. ὄνομα) μόνοις τοῖς ἀρχιερεύσιν ἐξάγειν ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν ἐπετέπρατο."

¹³⁶ Cf. above, n. 17 and 117.

¹³⁷ Therefore, Cicero, being an outstanding lawyer and well aware of the argumentative weakness of hearsay, shifted his argument from religious to legal matters: "Even were I to confess that everything (i.e. in Clodius' dedicatory ceremony) had been properly performed by the prescribed formulary and the ancient and traditional observances, I should nevertheless defend myself by appealing to the rights of the republic..." (*dom. 122*).

IV. Conclusions

Our survey of fixed prayer formularies in ancient religion has provided a surprisingly homogenous picture. The inherent categories and basic assumptions on how prayer works and on how prayer formularies must be dealt with are similar in Graeco-Roman religion, in Judaism, and in early Christianity: the concept of efficacy, expressed by the use of formularies, is virtually identical in, e.g., the Didymaean hymn for Soteira Kore and the Erythraean paean, in the *Carmina Saliaria* and the Decii's devotion, in Abraham's heavenly hymn and the Hodayot from Qumran, as in the eucharistic prayers of the *Didache* and Licinius' military supplication. This homogenous concept allows for several conclusions: (1) The formulary of an efficient prayer is of divine origin and, therefore, must be revealed or taught to the praying person. (2) Reciting such a formulary means returning it to the divine sphere; this double movement establishes the prayer's efficacy. (3) Access to such a formulary (and the permission to recite it) requires certain pre-conditions to be fulfilled, such as: righteousness, purity, priesthood, spiritual "ability" etc. Consequently, (4) the recitation of a given formulary is not open to the public but restricted. Only those who are worthy (or rewarded with the revelation) may legitimately recite it and pray.

This picture is of course ideal, since not every text represents all the details. Moreover, there are differences, e.g., in addressing the problem of how to master the double mediation process (revealing the text of a prayer and returning it). The majority of the references, however, indubitably correspond to the overall picture. The interdisciplinary approach and the relatively high uniformity of this concept with respect to both, the different religious traditions and the different genres of religious speech, allows for further insights which may help overcome a number of all too familiar divergences. I will only hint at a few of them.

A first aspect relates to the literary aspect of hymnic genre and its nature. In spite of the abundance of discernible genres, it does not seem wise to approach the phenomenon of religious speech from the

angle of the respective designations¹³⁸ or to separate prayers proper from other forms of hymnody. The basic idea of fixed formularies for prayers and their counterparts is the same even in the most opposite genres, such as: in hymns and psalms; in apotropaic, supplicatory, and thanksgiving prayers; in odes and epodes; in dithyrambs and paeans; in altar songs (*parabomia*) and sacrificial prayers; in vows, oaths and curses, and so on.¹³⁹ And since a particular genre is usually connected to a particular *Sitz im Leben*, it follows that their corresponding concepts of religious speech's efficacy encompass also the different situations in which they were recited. This insight is important, for it shows that religion did not work differently whenever prayer formularies were used for public recitation: in Imperial or other public sacral rites, in sacrificial cult, and in the numerous voluntary associations. As numerous amulets containing prayer formularies indicate, the same is, to a certain degree, true even for the private household piety of Roman, Jewish, or Christian religion. The description of the modes of recitation and the common phenomenon of praying according to obligatory formularies can, therefore, serve as the basis for a cultural comparison of ancient hymnody, for it avoids both, the insufficient assumption of a developmental genealogy¹⁴⁰ and the crucial

¹³⁸ An example is the exhaustive collection of material about ancient hymns by M. Lattke (*op. cit.*, n. 5) which is solely focused on the occurrences of derivates of ὑμν-.

¹³⁹ It is not accidental that several different "hymnic" genres can be subsumed by the general category of inspired hymnody, e.g.: Philo, *vit. cont.* 84 (on the hymnody of the Therapeuta): different metres (μέτρον), melodies (μέλη), and genres, such as προσόδιον, στάσιμον, στροφή, ἀντιστροφή. — *11QPs^a(DavComp)* XVII 4-11 (IV 92 *DJD*): psalms (*thlym*) and songs (*śrym*) for different cultic situations and "over frantics". — 1Cor 14,26ff. — In Col 3,16 and Eph 5,19, the list of hymns, psalms, and odes is given as an example for the hymnody "ἐν τῇ χάριτι".

¹⁴⁰ E.g., F. Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion*, Stuttgart 1979, 322ff., who places "hymns" within a range that reaches from "numinose Urlaute" to supplicatory prayers, thus assuming a religious evolution from the undifferentiated to the unequivocal.

problem of defining categories for classification.¹⁴¹

A second insight concerns the alleged difference between Roman and Christian religions, as it is expressed in Tertullian's statement I mentioned at the beginning. It is certainly not original to refer to the results of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* of the early part of this century and to the great accomplishments in the area known as "Antiquity and Christianity". However, the progressive distinction of scholarly disciplines has gone on and, in some instances, it inevitably led to results blinded by routine. There still is an ambiguous preoccupation for a central aspect of ancient religion. On the one hand, the prejudice (not only by scholars of early Christianity, but also by those of Roman religion) seems ineradicable that Roman religion was distinctly "formal" and that Romans recited their prayers without emotional, internal participation, as it would have been typical for Greek or Christian hymnody. Our survey has shown that reciting a fixed formulary does not mean to reel it off. Instead, a high consciousness of the divine origin of the formulary and of the honor of participating was at the basis of recitation: the accuracy with which public prayers were performed is an indicator of the awareness of the divine power and presence and does not stand for emotional distance. On the other hand, many scholars of early Christianity have yet to acknowledge that Christian prayer is not essentially different from its ancient parallels. One gets the impression that theologically sensitive phenomena (as prayer certainly is) are particularly attractive for apologetic studies. But the claim of an essential, phenomenological difference between Christian and pagan prayer cannot be substantiated. As the Christian material indicates, it is highly improbable that — besides the Corinthian *glossolalia* — free, spontaneous praying within a public setting ever existed, i.e. in the framework of the communal eucharistic assemblies. The gift of the spirit was not expressed

¹⁴¹ F. Stolz, "Vergleichende Hymnenforschung. Ein Nachwort," in: W. Burkert, F.S. (eds.), *Hymnen der Alten Welt im Kulturvergleich* (OBO 131), Fribourg/Göttingen 1994, 109–119: 110ff. brings the problem to the point: internal categories for (hymnic) genre are problematic and are often applied without sufficient methodological reflection. External categories, on the other hand, necessarily evoke modern prejudices.

by spontaneous, ecstatic praying, but by the inspiration of hymnography. And although only few examples from the second and third centuries are preserved, we have a number of hints for this kind of pneumatic hymnography.¹⁴²

A final aspect is closely related to the sociological setting of prayer: The much belabored issue of religion and magic. One of the most interesting aspects of our survey is the fact that the wording of prayer formularies must be precisely recited and appropriately pronounced. Thus, the intended effect depends primarily on the proper formulary. Since the formulary is of divine origin, religious prerequisites of the praying person are important only inasmuch as they grant access to the formulary: the prayer works *ex opere operato*. That the efficacy and functioning of “religious” prayers is no different from “magical” prayers (e.g., in the magical papyri) is certainly not an original insight,¹⁴³ although it may be noted that there is a long tradition of outstanding scholars holding the opposite view.¹⁴⁴ However, most of the distinctive features of fixed formularies for “religious” prayers are also true for their “magic” analogies: (1) the spells and prayers contained, e.g., in the Greek magic papyri have always existed in written form: many of the *voices magicae* show up in precisely the same form in many different texts. (2) As shown earlier, the magic prayer is of divine origin: the knowledge of its wording and the powerful name of the god is understood as the result of a special revelation.¹⁴⁵ It is

¹⁴² Cf. M. Hengel, “Song about Christ” (above, n. 33), *passim*. I do not agree with Hengel, however, in the assumption that in early Christian worship spontaneous song existed significantly; the material presented by him (*ibid.* 246ff.) only documents pneumatically inspired *hymnography* (which is out of question), but not “spontaneous song”.

¹⁴³ F. Pfister already concluded “daß kein prinzipieller Unterschied zwischen Zauberspruch und Gebet, so wenig wie zwischen Zauberei und Religion, besteht” (*PRE Suppl.* IV, 325); D.E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity”, in: *ANRW* II 23/2 (New York/Berlin 1980), 1507-1557.

¹⁴⁴ D.E. Aune (*ibid.*) lists some of the more prominent names, such as U.v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, W. Boussett, M.P. Nilsson, and A.J. Festugière.

¹⁴⁵ Besides the references already mentioned (above, n. 127), cf. *PGM* IV 885-87 (the secret magical name of Osiris has been revealed by Hermes Trismegistos who

efficient only, if recited exactly in its written form,¹⁴⁶ and it must be kept in secret.¹⁴⁷ (3) Similarly, the unintelligible *voices magicae* are seen as the original, old names of the deities; therefore, a deity must be addressed in prayer by its unaltered name.¹⁴⁸ (4) The frequent request to recite the exact wording of spells and prayers¹⁴⁹ is, therefore, not really surprising, and it constitutes a close parallel to “religious” analogies: “religious” and “magic” prayers share exactly the same

had inscribed the names in hieroglyphs). More important is the concept of initiation: according to the “Mithras liturgy” *PGM* IV 475ff, the magician gains knowledge of the divine names and mysteries in an ecstatic ceremony which resembles not only Lucius’ initiation (Apuleius, *met.* 11,22), but is also a close analogy to the initiation by the Muses (see above, n. 100). Cf. H.D. Betz, “Secrecy in the Greek Magical Papyri,” in: H.G. Kippenberg, G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, Leiden 1995, 153-175: 169ff.

¹⁴⁶ It may suffice to point to the numerous occurrences of the formula “λόγος (λεγόμενος)” in *PGM*, introducing the precise formulary, e.g. *PGM* IV 286; 857; 1168; 1228; 1275; 1398; 1498 etc.

¹⁴⁷ For the necessity to keep the formulary secret cf. H. D. Betz, *op. cit.*, 160ff. An impressive example for the magic knowledge of the divine name is the prayer to Hermes *PGM* VIII 1-60: “I know you, Hermes, who you are and whence you are, and which is your city...” (13f); “I also know your barbarian names: *pharnatat*, *barachel*, *chtha*. These are your barbarian names” (15f); “your true name is written on the holy stele of Hermoupolis, where you are born. This is your true name: *osergariach nomaphi* ...” (41ff).

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Iamblichus, *myst. Aegypt.* 7,5: The *voices magicae* used in theurgic ritual are not meaningless words, but the names (or: designations; ὄνομα means both) of the gods in Egyptian or Assyrian dialect, and the gods prefer to be addressed as such: the invariability fits the gods’ own unchangeable essence; “since the Egyptians were the first to receive the gift of being close to the gods, the gods love to be addressed in the language of this people. It is, at any rate, no deceit of the magicians.” The unintelligibility of divine ὄνόματα, their extremely high age, and the prohibition to alter them, clearly resembles, e.g., the *carmina Saliaria* (see above, n. 116).

¹⁴⁹ E.g., *PGM* XIII 441.570: ἔστιν δὲ ἡ ἐπίκλησις οὕτως, ὡς κεῖται πάντα ἀκριβῶς. Strikingly, the neo-platonic Marinus, at the end of the fifth century the leader of the Academy, says about magic prayers that they must be recited in the appropriate order and pronunciation (*vita Procli* 28, 49f ed. V. Cousin, *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita*, Paris 1864 = repr. Frankfurt 1962).

religious *Weltbild*, and, from a phenomenological perspective, they cannot be separated.¹⁵⁰ Although magic is despised by all the major religious traditions in Hellenistic antiquity¹⁵¹ (Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian), it is none the less extant in all of them: magic (and magical enchantment) is, therefore, simply a designation for a socially deviant form of religion (and religious prayer), thus marking a sociological rather than an essential distinction.¹⁵²

The close adherence to approved prayer formularies is neither particularly magic or superstitious, but a characteristic of “true” religion; since it indicates the binding power of *religio*, this concept is present

¹⁵⁰ Cf. F. Graf, *op. cit.* n. 5.

¹⁵¹ For Greece cf. Plato, *resp.* 364c; *leg.* 909b. 933b/c (cf. A. Abt, *Die Apologie des Apuleius von Madaura und die antike Zauberei*, RGVV 14/2, Gießen 1908, 42); Demosthenes 25,80, and, e.g., the law against magic from Teos, the *Dirae Teorum* (“Whoever applies a destructive *pharmakon* against the citizens of Teos in general or a single person...”: D. Lewis (ed.), *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century*, Oxford, ²1988, nr. 30 A 1) etc. — In Rome, laws against magic were already part of the *XII Tab.* (cf. the laws against magic and mantic collected by E. Massoneau, *La magie dans l’antiquité Romaine*, Paris 1934, 136-261).

¹⁵² This is probably the reason why D.E. Aune, in his otherwise illuminating study on magic in early Christianity, has so little to say about “Magical Prayer” (*op. cit.* n. 143, 1551-55): since prayer in general is magical, he must concentrate on the few instances of early Christian blessings and curses, which he regards as “one of the most characteristic forms of magical prayer” — but only, “if, within the context of religious deviance, the act of invoking formulas of benison and malediction is regarded tantamount to achieving the desired effect” (*ibid.*, 1551). I cannot follow this sophisticated distinction: on the one hand, the magical papyri do not only contain blessings and curses, but also outright prayers and hymns (whose genre is not in question); on the other hand, the desired effect always presupposes an “act of invocation” — at this point, Aune falls back behind the position he already maintained. The fact that the magical papyri contain pure hymns (collected by E. Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der Kaiserzeit*, AAWG.PH 3/49, Göttingen ²1963) was confusing for those who believe in an essential difference between magic and religion. Source criticism is a typical solution: since the original hymns cannot be attributed to “magicians” (M.P. Nilsson, *Opuscula Selecta III*, Lund 1960, 131f.), they have been expanded by “unintelligible formulas” (R. Reitzenstein, *op. cit.* n. 115, 14). See also H.G. Kippenberg, *op. cit.* n. 47.

in all ancient religious traditions. Thus Paul's concept of pneumatic prayer in Rm 8 is fully consonant with the religious mentality expressed by the double mediating process of the prayer formulary: the spirit plays the part of the formulary.¹⁵³ It is important to see that the prayer "in the name of Jesus"¹⁵⁴ has the same function as pneumatic prayer or as praying according to a formulary of divine origin: Jesus is understood as a reliable mediator of the prayer and can, therefore, promise that this prayer will certainly be heard and fulfilled.¹⁵⁵ From here, it is only a short step to the correct recitation of the appropriate formulary in public — for which the prayer formularies of the *Didache* and the frequent quarrels about the proper form of the doxologies represent early traces.

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¹⁵³ The Christians receive the spirit as a gift (8,9), implying a moral prerequisite (8,5ff) as well as a spiritual ability through which the Christians pray (8,15); this gift makes the Christians worthy as the "sons of God" (8,14.21). On the other hand, they pray "through the spirit" (8,15): the spirit carries their prayer before God (8,26f) and, thus, warrants for its efficacy (8,27ff).

¹⁵⁴ Mk 11,24; Mt 7,7ff.; Lk 11,9ff; Joh 14,13f.; 15,7; Eph 5,20; Jas 5,13ff. etc.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. A. Dietzel, *Die Gründe der Erhörungsgewißheit nach den Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, Diss. theol. Mainz, 1955.

THE PORTABLE BULLHE SHAH: BIOGRAPHY,
CATEGORIZATION, AND AUTHORSHIP IN THE STUDY OF
PUNJABI SUFI POETRY¹

ROBIN RINEHART

Summary

The Punjabi poet Bullhe Shah (1680-1758) is revered by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. In the extensive body of interpretive literature devoted to his life and work, scholars have contested his religious identity, characterizing Bullhe Shah in various ways, e.g. as a Sufi, a Vedantic Sufi, or a Vaiṣṇava Vedantic Sufi. This article examines the nature of the debates about Bullhe Shah's identity, and how these debates have shaped the varying portrayals of Bullhe Shah's life, the corpus of his poetry, and the characterization of his religious affiliation. I argue that a series of unexamined assumptions — about the nature of biography and its relation to the development of a worldview, about the categorization of religious identity, and about the nature of authorship — have created these conflicting portrayals of the poet and his work, making Bullhe Shah a kind of “portable” figure who is placed in widely divergent contexts. I conclude by arguing that Bullhe Shah's portability, or his placement within different contexts (for different purposes), is itself a useful topic for analysis, and provides the basis for a potentially more fruitful study not only of Bullhe Shah's life and work, but also of his audiences and their responses to him.

There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim,
Let us abandon our pride and sit together like young girls at their spinning
wheels
I am neither Sunni nor Shi'ah. I've chosen the path of the lineage of peace.
Bullhe Shah²

¹ Portions of this paper were presented at the 1996 conference of the American Academy of Religion in New Orleans, LA, and at the 1997 Seventh International Conference on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages in Venice, Italy. The author would like to thank conference participants for their comments, as well as Tony K. Stewart and Patricia Donahue, who read earlier drafts of this paper and made very helpful suggestions.

² Punjabi verse from Sayyad Nazir Ahmad, *Kalām-e-Bullhe Shāh*, p. 83. This and subsequent translations are the author's. For other versions of this poem, see

In the Indian subcontinent, where communal conflicts are a tragic yet commonplace feature of the landscape, it is intriguing and perhaps ironic to find a poet claimed by different religious communities. The popularity of Bullhe Shah's poetry crosses both the contemporary communal boundaries between the religious traditions of Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism, and the political border between Pakistan and India that divides the Punjabi-speaking region. Musicians, from the amateur singer who performs for neighborhood friends and family, to internationally acclaimed artists such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, sing his poems. Lines from some of his most celebrated poems have entered the Punjabi language as everyday idiomatic phrases. There are countless printed editions of his work in both the Gurmukhi and Urdu scripts. He figures prominently in most surveys of Punjabi literature, and there is an extensive body of interpretive literature devoted to analysis of his biography, his intellectual development, his literary style, and his worldview. All those who write about him rhapsodize about the deceptively simple elegance of his poetry, the beauty of his expression of his longing for God, and his skillful use of images from the everyday life and folklore of the rural Punjab.

Bullhe Shah's cross-communal popularity raises many intriguing questions about religious and communal identity in the Indian subcontinent, and there is in fact a vast body of interpretive literature concerning Bullhe Shah's life and work. This literature, however, raises many more questions than it answers. For there is no consensus as to who Bullhe Shah was, how he lived his life, where his religious allegiances lay, or even how to read the message of his poetry. Indeed virtually every aspect of Bullhe Shah's life and work is contested, from the basic outlines of his life to the import of his poetry. Interpreters have sought to claim him for one religious community or another. In some studies, Bullhe Shah is presented as an

Singh, p. 78; Faqir, p. 218; Ramakrishna, p. 65; Rafat, p. 177. The reference to the spinning wheel is common in Punjabi poetry; it refers to the practice of young girls getting together to spin cloth as part of their dowry. The young girls are likened to humans preparing to meet God.

enthusiastic advocate of the Hindu tradition; in others he is a model Muslim, and in still others, he is shown to have been deeply influenced by Sikhism. Over a century's worth of study has created multiple, radically divergent portrayals of this one poet.

But a closer look at this scholarly literature, with its divergent views of the poet and his work, makes clear that for all its paeans to objective historical reconstruction, it is at heart more revealing of the personal and/or communal biases of the interpreters themselves. The central argument of this essay is that the nature of the study of Bullhe Shah itself — the questions asked, and the ways in which those questions have been answered — has led to an interpretive impasse that reveals far more about Bullhe Shah's critics than anything about Bullhe Shah as a historical figure. These conflicting analyses are produced by three closely related assumptions about (a) the nature of biographical information and its relation to the development of a worldview, (b) about the nature of religious identity in the Indian subcontinent in the 18th and 20th centuries, and (c) about the nature of authorship. They are further complicated by the limitations of the manuscript and other evidence available. My argument is based upon a reading of the range of critical work published on Bullhe Shah in Pakistan, India, and north America and Europe. Rather than presenting a detailed reconstruction of the different interpretations of Bullhe Shah, I will describe the general strategies (presuppositions, use of evidence, forms of argument) used in varying degrees in virtually all of these studies, regardless of their final conclusions about Bullhe Shah.³ Obviously not all the analyses of Bullhe Shah which I cite use all the strategies that I detail below, but each exhibits some of the general tendencies that I will describe. The goal of many critical studies of Bullhe Shah and his work is to anchor him firmly within specific historical and religious contexts, contexts which serve to "explain" the poet in some way. Yet the fact that different interpreters have placed Bullhe Shah in such different contexts suggests

³ For a more detailed discussion of the range of interpretations of Bullhe Shah's life and work, see Rinehart, "Interpretations of Bullhe Shah," *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 3, 1 (1996), pp. 45-63.

that he has in fact become a kind of “portable” figure. I conclude by suggesting that a close analysis of this very “portability” — Bullhe Shah’s location in different contexts — helps us to understand not only something about the poet himself, but also about his audiences and the varying ways in which they respond to his poetry and stories of his life.

The scholarly analyses of Bullhe Shah fall roughly into two major groups: one places Bullhe Shah squarely within the Islamic tradition, and the other locates Bullhe Shah’s true inspiration in the Hindu tradition. There are subsets within each group. In the Islamic group, some portray Bullhe Shah as a Sufi champion of the oppressed (e.g. Taufiq Rafat, Sayyad Nazir Ahmad), others as a pious follower of Islamic law.⁴ In the Hindu group, some style him a Vedantin (the most prominent example being Lajwanti Ramakrishna), others a Vaiṣṇava Vedantin (e.g. Sadhu Ram Sharda), and still others argue that he was profoundly influenced by the words of the early Sikh gurus as well (e.g. Surindar Singh Kohli).⁵ In the discussion that follows, I will provide representative examples from each camp, with further references in the notes.

Bullhe Shah and Biography

The starting point for most studies of Bullhe Shah seems innocent enough.⁶ When and where was he born? What kind of education

⁴ See also Ghafran Sayyad, p. 16; Kuldip Singh, p. 47; Rafat, p. 3.

⁵ See, for example, Kala Singh Bedi, “*Bullhe Shāh de Kalām dā Gurbāñī nāl Tulnātmak Adhiaīn*” in Rattan Singh Jaggi, ed., *Khoj Patrikā, Sāīn Bullhe Shah Ank* (Patiala: Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, 1991), pp. 134-150. This is an especially intriguing argument, for its proponents generally see the influence of Sikhism in seemingly quasi-Vedantic statements attributed to Bullhe Shah. The unstated assumption, then, is that Sikhism is very much a part of the Hindu tradition, a notion at odds with much of the colonial and postcolonial politics of recent Sikhism (which has sought to distance itself from Hinduism).

⁶ See, for example, Sharda, p. 149; Atam Singh, p. 2; Ramakrishna, pp. 40-41, 43-46; Kohli, pp. 12-23; Bhatti, pp. 1-4, 12-13; Puri and Shangari, pp. 1-31; Bhasa Vibhag Punjab, pp. 5-11; Kaur, pp. 1-4; Kuldip Singh, pp. 1-18; Rafat, pp. 1-6; Ahmad, p. 5.

did his family provide for him? What was the social status of his family? What were the formative influences in his early life? What was his religious identity? Unfortunately for historians, the information is sketchy. Most agree that Bullhe Shah lived from 1680-1758, that he was born into a family of Sayyid Muslims (i.e. who traced their descent from the family of the prophet Muhammad), and that he received the education typical for a young man of such status. Interestingly, most studies don't actually describe what such an education would be; it is implied that it would entail instruction in Arabic and Persian, with study of the Quran, the Islamic legal tradition, and the Persian literary tradition. The evidence for such claims is the work attributed to Bullhe Shah, which contains references to the Quran, the Islamic legal tradition, and Persian Sufi literature.

What is the purpose of such questions? Through providing answers to them, interpreters establish Bullhe Shah as a historical figure who lived in a particular time and place. Having established the time and place, they can then identify certain social, political, religious, and other factors which might have had a bearing on his life. Such general information, along with information about the type of family into which he was born, and the education he received, is presumed to reveal the forces that shaped his worldview. Although there is indeed consensus on the most basic details of Bullhe Shah's early life, what follows from these details is less easy to establish. While we can certainly describe the social, religious, and political climate of Bullhe Shah's time in very general terms, we have no evidence that demonstrates conclusively how this climate affected Bullhe Shah. And even if we can establish facts about his family and their religious allegiances, this does not necessarily mean that Bullhe Shah had those same religious allegiances, although this is what most interpreters suggest. For example, in discussions of the role of Bullhe Shah's family environment in shaping his thought, the question with which most are concerned is whether Bullhe Shah's father was a strict follower of Islamic law, or a Sufi who was not overly concerned with following law to the letter. The conclusion that most interpreters reach is more a function of their own reading of Bullhe Shah's worldview than a

reflection of any conclusive evidence one way or the other. Interpreters who place Bullhe Shah in some category related to Hinduism are particularly keen to demonstrate that Bullhe Shah transcended what they consider the dry legalism of Islam at a young age as he moved towards a higher level of spiritual comprehension (Vaiṣṇava Vedanta or Vedanta). Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal, for example, write of Bullhe Shah's "romantic defiance of Muslim sharia."⁷

The intention (most often unstated) of these preliminary questions about Bullhe Shah's life and times is to establish Bullhe Shah within a nexus of factors (social, religious, political, educational, family-related) which will both determine and explain the content of his poetry. The thread of the argument seems to be that once we have established Bullhe Shah as having been shaped by these particular forces, we can then determine his particular worldview, which will be reflected in his work. Thus the initial conjecture about Bullhe Shah's early life is gradually reified into historical "facts"; these facts are then used to support further conjecture. Some argue for a lifelong consistency in Bullhe Shah's work; others see evidence for a series of developmental phases culminating in a final, most advanced worldview. The assumption is that the details of Bullhe Shah's biography will then illuminate either position: either he adopted and maintained a particular worldview at some point in his life, or he developed through series of systematic stages that produce a meaningful, recoverable pattern to his thought.

The problem with this method is that it creates a circular process of interpretation. Many of the details that provide the raw material for Bullhe Shah's biographies have been gleaned from his poetry; these details — now instantiated "facts" — in turn are used to explain other aspects of his poetry. Thus interpreters use Bullhe Shah's life to explain his poetry, and his poetry to explain his life. Yet seldom can

⁷ Sekhon and Duggal, p. 71. For more on Bullhe Shah and Islamic law, see Sharda, pp. 157-60; Atam Singh, p. 6; Ramakrishna, pp. 47-49; Kohli, p. 41; Kuldip Singh, p. 47; Rafat, p. 3; Sayyad, p. 16.

either strategy be grounded on solid historical evidence. Our evidence about Bullhe Shah's life, beyond that which may be inferred from his poems, is sketchy as best. To be sure, there are multiple hagiographical accounts which provide a wealth of alleged information about significant events in his life, but they are grounded in the aims of hagiography, not critical historiography. The interpreters never seem to take into account that the primary source of this allegedly historical material is Bullhe Shah's poetry — and even that body of work is problematic.

The Bullhe Shah Corpus

As part of their analysis of Bullhe Shah, most interpreters also seek to define a corpus of work clearly authored by the historical Bullhe Shah. The earliest surviving manuscripts of Bullhe Shah's poetry date to at least one hundred fifty years after his death. The written manuscripts are transcriptions of musical performances of Bullhe Shah's poetry; they reflect dialectal variations, apparent interpolations and elaborations from the performers themselves, and in some cases verses or entire poems that are found in the works of other poets (often with the signature line of another poet preserved intact). Subsequent printed editions show that the corpus of poetry attributed to Bullhe Shah both varies widely, and has expanded substantially over time, a development typical of the work of many medieval Indian poets. If we begin our analyses of Bullhe Shah by positing him as a historical figure with an identifiable corpus of work, we are immediately faced with an insurmountable problem — we can neither establish the historical details of Bullhe Shah's life with any certainty, nor do we have the means to establish which poems among those attributed to him were composed by Bullhe Shah the historical figure. How then is the corpus defined?

The implicit assumption of Bullhe Shah's interpreters is that hidden somewhere within the fanciful, conflicting pictures painted in hagiographies, and somewhere within the overgrown corpus of poems attributed to Bullhe Shah lies a clearly definable historical figure,

who produced a doctrinally and stylistically consistent body of poetry, and who may be uncovered. Yet we have little information other than the hagiographical tradition with which to establish details of Bullhe Shah's life, and virtually nothing other than the poetry attributed to Bullhe Shah to define his philosophy and worldview (if indeed he was philosophically consistent throughout his life). If the information about his life is problematic, and the corpus of his poetry is suspect (at least insofar as attributing either to a historically locatable figure), then using one to establish the other is clearly a difficult method to defend. But this is the unstated tactic used by virtually all interpreters of Bullhe Shah, and it becomes the foundation for further analyses and assertions about Bullhe Shah.

Interpreters first of all assume that Bullhe Shah's life shaped his worldview, a notion which then becomes the basis for determining the authenticity of the various poems attributed to him. Once interpreters posit a particular reading of Bullhe Shah's life (for example as a law-follower, or legally lax Sufi) they can then use that reading as a criterion for determining which poems are authentic. If Bullhe Shah was a strict follower of Islamic law, then any poems which are critical of Islamic law must be spurious. Alternatively, if Bullhe Shah was lax in his observance of law, such poems must be genuine. Or, if one posits a series of developmental phases, then a poem rejecting Islamic law could be attributed either to an early or later phase of development. The result is satisfying for interpreters, for this circular hermeneutic strategy simultaneously produces a more sharply focused corpus of poetry and biography. It not only eliminates particular poems, but also any problematic "biographical" information in those poems. It is on the basis of these kinds of preliminary inquiries into the factors understood to have shaped his life — based upon reading Bullhe Shah's life into his work, and his work into his life (and using one to defend the other) — that interpreters build their claims about Bullhe Shah's communal identity and worldview.⁸

⁸ Hawley has identified a similar process at work in the traditions surrounding the medieval Hindi poet Sūrdās, whose poems are used to generate hagiographical

The Categorization of Religious Identity

This circular hermeneutic strategy can easily serve the purposes of an interpreter who wishes to establish Bullhe Shah as a representative of a particular community or worldview. When interpreters try to identify and name Bullhe Shah's worldview, they first of all presuppose a particular ideological framework, with an implicit understanding of the range of possibilities available. What ideological categories were available to a late seventeenth/early eighteenth century poet? For most interpreters, the question at its most basic level resolves into two fundamental categories: Islam and Hinduism. Bullhe Shah must be placed in either one or the other of these categories. Yet to make so seemingly simple a classification is not only difficult, but also politically charged.

As is the case with many other poets of north India (e.g. Kabir, Gurū Nānak), the poetry attributed to Bullhe Shah contains elements that interpreters associate with both "Islam" and "Hinduism." Bullhe Shah's vocabulary is the most common starting point for interpreters; they focus on terms that the poet used for expressing overtly religious concepts (e.g. names for god, terminology for states of mystical realization).⁹ Interpreters generally assume that the use of words whose origin is Persian or Arabic indicates a predilection towards Islam; the use of Sanskrit or Sanskrit-derived words Hinduism.¹⁰ Surindar Singh Kohli, who styles Bullhe Shah a Vedantin, lists a number of Sanskrit-derived words for love from Bullhe Shah's poems as a means of bolstering his assertion that Bullhe Shah was

accounts, which in turn affect the reading of the poems attributed to him. John Stratton Hawley, "Author and Authority," p. 280.

⁹ There is one interpreter who challenges this strategy: Trilochan Singh, in his article "*Bullhe Shah dā Tasawwuf*" (p. 430) argues that the simple usage of a Hindu term for God does not necessarily make one a Hindu.

¹⁰ Usborne (p. 10) for example, writes that Bullhe Shah's poems "show very little elaboration of thought or imagination. Some of them have a larger proportion of Sanskrit words than one might expect in a Muslim writer, but this may be because there were fewer Arabic and Persian words in Panjabi at the time."

influenced by Hinduism more than Islam.¹¹ And Sadhu Ram Sharda, who considers Bullhe Shah a Vaiṣṇava Vedantin, argues that even in poems in which Bullhe Shah uses Islamic terminology, “the spirit therein is undoubtedly Vedanta.”¹² In contrast, Taufiq Rafat, who portrays Bullhe Shah as Sufi champion of the oppressed, argues that even when Bullhe Shah makes reference to Hindu ideas, he uses Arabic phrases to make it clear that he is first and foremost a Muslim.¹³ Interpreters also weigh the relative frequency of references to the myth, history, and literature of Islam and Hinduism. There are yet further characterizations that are less clearly defined, yet at the heart of many interpretations: namely, the interpreter’s general impression of Bullhe Shah’s worldview, based upon the interpreter’s reading of his poetry.

Perhaps the best illustration of this strategy is a chart found in Ahmad’s edition of Bullhe Shah’s poems, which he considers the most valuable part of his effort. He asked nine Punjabi poets to read sixty-six poems attributed to Bullhe Shah (poems which had already been chosen for Ahmad’s edition) and select the ones that seemed authentic to them. Ahmad notes that the poems that received the highest number of votes from the poets were also those most beloved by the people.¹⁴ For Ahmad, whose Bullhe Shah is a champion of the oppressed, it is the “people” who can recognize the genuine article.

Similarly, Abdul Majid Bhatti establishes the “style and point of view” of Bullhe Shah as a criterion for determining authentic poems; he further notes that on these grounds he eliminated poems attributed to Bullhe Shah which were not directly related to the Quran and other Islamic literature, and instead contained references to the Ganges river (sacred to Hindus) and Shām (“the dark one”; an epithet of Krishna) as God.¹⁵ It is those very same poems which provide evidence for those who wish to style Bullhe Shah a Vaiṣṇava. Ramakrishna notes

¹¹ Kohli, p. 43.

¹² Sharda, p. 150.

¹³ Rafat, p. 18.

¹⁴ See Ahmad’s chart at the end of his “Introduction” to *Kalām-e-Bullhe Shāh*.

¹⁵ Bhatti, p. 10.

that there are many poems attributed to Bullhe Shah, but the authentic ones are distinguished by his “force and simplicity.”¹⁶ She cites poems which she believes to exemplify a Vedantic spirit (even when they contain Islamic references).¹⁷ Neither Bhatti’s “style and point of view” nor Ramakrishna’s “force and simplicity” is explained, but each was clearly a crucial concept in these interpretations.

Other interpreters rely upon their sense of Bullhe Shah’s use of rhyme and meter, and establish this as a criterion of authenticity. Rafat maintains that Bullhe Shah followed no particular rules of rhyme or meter, whereas Ahmad argues that metrical consistency is an indication of an authentic Bullhe Shah poem (in some instances he rearranged the lines of verses from other editions and performances to create new metrically consistent, and therefore authentic, poems).¹⁸ It is important to note here that a particular interpreter’s sense of what actually constitutes the “real” corpus of Bullhe Shah’s poetry itself shapes the interpreter’s reading of the worldview of that corpus; the interpretive strategy thus far is based upon a series of mutually dependent factors — life, poetry, worldview — none of which has an independent grounding with outside evidence to support it. The degree of circularity increases.

The most significant rifts emerge among Bullhe Shah’s interpreters as they define his religious identity by placing him within a particular category. Among those who categorize Bullhe Shah as first and foremost a Muslim, his precise placement within an Islamic framework varies. While he is virtually always cast as a Sufi, to some, he was a Sufi who adhered firmly to the dictates of Islamic law, and to others, he was a Sufi whose intense mystical experiences transcended the need for a predictably dry legalism. For those who locate Bullhe Shah within the Hindu tradition, there are particular challenges. That he had some connection with Islam cannot be denied (his very name, after all, suggests that he was Muslim, and not Hindu), and thus Bullhe

¹⁶ Ramakrishna, p. 64.

¹⁷ Ramakrishna, p. 64.

¹⁸ Rafat, p. 29; Ahmad, pp. 11, 12.

Shah is defined in varying guises as a Vedantic Sufi, or sometimes a Vaiṣṇava Vedantic Sufi. Interpreters making these categorizations give only nominal recognition to Islam, and argue that the real heart of Bullhe Shah's religiosity is in Vedanta or Vaiṣṇava Vedanta.

Bullhe Shah's interpreters' acceptance of Islam and Hinduism as the appropriate basic categories rests upon three key presuppositions:

a. *Islam and Hinduism are two distinct religious traditions, each with clear, defining features, and definable, sometimes hierarchically ranked subsets, such as Sufism (as a subset of Islam) and Vedanta/Vaiṣṇava Vedanta (as subsets of Hinduism).* Interpreters proceed as if there were self-evident, agreed upon understandings of what constitutes Islam and Hinduism as distinct categories. Thus it is self-evident that interpreters should ask into which of the two Bullhe Shah fits; the way to make such a determination is to inventory the features of his poetry, and assign them to their respective categories. When there are features associated with both categories present, interpreters adopt different strategies. Some adopt a “majority rules” criterion by weighing the features against one another, with the majority of references determining the dominant category (more references to “Islamic” elements than “Hindu” elements means Bullhe Shah was Muslim). Others invoke criteria of authenticity and philosophical purity: if the interpreter is inclined to place Bullhe Shah in the category of Islam, then “Hindu” features are likely to be considered non-authentic accretions in the Bullhe Shah corpus (and of course a similar strategy is possible for someone wishing to place Bullhe Shah within a Hindu framework).

b. *There are distinct, identifiable boundaries between Islam and Hinduism, and as so conceived, Islam and Hinduism have nothing in common with one another (thus an idea is either Islamic or Hindu, but not both).* Any form of religious expression which contains elements from these two separate categorical constructs requires explanation, which in some cases involves the creation of a “hybrid” or

“syncretist” category, such as “Vedantic Sufi.”¹⁹ The basic categorical structure is assumed to be valid, and in a case where Bullhe Shah’s expression seems not to fit the existing categories, either a new hybrid sub-category is created, or it is assumed that there is a problem in the poet’s corpus itself (i.e. if interpreters could determine which of the poems attributed to Bullhe Shah are authentic, those authentic poems would surely yield a clear philosophical category). That the categories themselves simply might not be the correct ones to invoke for Bullhe Shah is not an option that the interpreters consider; the categories themselves are not challenged.

c. *The categories “Islam” and “Hinduism” and the boundaries now understood to separate them have remained constant — i.e. twentieth-century conceptions of what constitute “Islam” and “Hinduism” may be read back into Bullhe Shah’s lifetime.* Current conceptions of Islam and Hinduism are to a large extent the product of colonial and post-colonial discussions of religious identity, and reflect concerns which are likely quite different from any we might identify in Bullhe Shah’s time. In the present day, there are multiple understandings of “Islam” and “Hinduism.” It is therefore especially critical that interpreters be clear about what exactly they mean when they use such labels, whether it be for the present or the past. They must realize that their own understanding of “Islam” or “Hinduism” — whether they spell it out or not — may not be the same understanding that their readers have. And they must also take into account the fluidity of such categories over time. If we are treating Bullhe Shah as a historical figure who lived at a specific time, in a specific place, whose worldview was shaped in part by the social and religious climate of his time, then we must have a clear idea of what that social and religious climate was. How did people conceive of Islam and Hinduism in the early eighteenth century? Perhaps the historical figure

¹⁹ For a very useful discussion of the problems of using terms such as “syncretism” and “hybrid”, see Tony K. Stewart and Carl Ernst, “Syncretism” in Peter Claus and Margaret Mills, eds., *South Asian Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (Garland Press, forthcoming).

Bullhe Shah did not think in terms of “Islam” and “Hinduism” as definitive categories, and other categories may have been of greater import to him. While most interpreters do not ask these questions, they are central to a defense of the interpretations that they construct.

Despite such fundamental problems in the move to categorize Bullhe Shah, interpreters generally proceed from this point by adducing evidence for the particular categorical classification that they have chosen. The interpreter who labels Bullhe Shah a Vedantic Sufi presents poems said to express Vedantic ideas²⁰; the interpreter who classes Bullhe Shah as completely Muslim sets forth poems brimming with references to Islamic lore.²¹

Making Categories Work

The wide range of categorizations of Bullhe Shah’s worldview and religious identity — from law-abiding Muslim to Vedantic mystic — shows all too clearly the difficulty in placing him in any particular category that all his interpreters will find acceptable. In part, the range of categorizations is a function of the varying initial interpretive moves discussed above — the mutually dependent relation of his life and poetry. But these multiple categorizations do not exist in isolation; many of them are presented explicitly as correctives to other categorizations. Bullhe Shah’s interpreters fill many pages with defenses of the particular categories that they have chosen, and critiques of the positions of other editors and interpreters. Many editions begin with critiques of other editions of Bullhe Shah’s poems.²² Ramakrishna’s portrayal of Bullhe Shah as the quintessential Advaita

²⁰ See, for example, Ramakrishna, pp. 54-61.

²¹ In some instances, the very same poem is used to illustrate both positions. For examples of this, see Rinehart, “Interpretations of the Poetry of Bullhe Shah,” pp. 53-57.

²² See, for example, Faqir’s introduction, especially pp. 12-13; Ahmad, pp. 6-12; Ramakrishna, pp. 69-71.

Vedantin receives the sharpest criticism, particularly in works published in Pakistan.²³

The result is that a great deal of ink has been spilled defending various assessments of Bullhe Shah, with little questioning about whether the means of assessment themselves are valid. Bullhe Shah, however styled by his interpreters, simply does not fit neatly into any of the basic categories that all his interpreters assume, whether one relies on a poorly edited printed edition, or transcribes the poems as they are sung by performers, or uses the best critical editions available, uses just a few poems, or many. As a result, a substantial portion of the literature on Bullhe Shah is devoted not to the poetry itself, but to making plausible the various labels that have been proposed for him. Those who portray Bullhe Shah as drawing his inspiration solely from the Islamic mystical tradition (and certainly not from Hindu mysticism) must defend this stance by explaining any poems (if they accept them as “authentic”) which suggest otherwise, and they must also argue against those who portray Bullhe Shah in other ways. Those who argue that the bulk of Bullhe Shah’s inspiration came from outside Islam must show why they believe this to be so, and must demonstrate what makes him a “Vedantic Sufi.” It is worth noting that despite the ubiquitous use of categorization as a primary means of interpreting Bullhe Shah’s work, none of his interpreters ever actually delineates or defines the categories that they employ. Instead, they present the categories as self-evident, and then construct accounts of how Bullhe Shah came to fit into particular categories.

The most common strategy in these accounts is to construct quasi-historical narratives about the development of Sufism in the Punjab. Interpreters who style Bullhe Shah a Muslim suggest that the antecedents of his thought are to be found only within the Sufi tradition. The most detailed version of this argument is found in Khan’s *Ākhiā Bullhe Shāh*. Khan begins with a discussion of the Vedas, Upanishads, and Sankara’s Advaita Vedanta, and argues that while there

²³ See, for example, Trilochan Singh, p. 430; Rafat, pp. 2, 8, 223-224; Khan, p. 40; Sayyad, p. 40; and for an especially biting critique, Ahmad’s introduction. Kohli, p. 55, quibbles with some of Ramakrishna’s interpretations as well.

may be superficial similarities between Śankara's ideas and those of Bullhe Shah's, it would simply be a mistake to assume some direct connection. Bullhe Shah's real inspiration, he argues, is ibn-‘Arabī's theory of the unity of being, or *wahdat al-wujūd*. Khan presents no specific historical evidence to substantiate this claim; his rhetorical strategy, however, is to make historically plausible the notion that Bullhe Shah's ideas could have logically come only from the Sufi tradition.²⁴

In contrast, interpreters placing Bullhe Shah in a Hindu framework argue that Sufism itself has its roots in ancient Indian philosophy, and/or that the Punjabi Sufis were more profoundly influenced by their “Indian” (i.e. Hindu) environment than the Sufi tradition itself. Sharda presents the most detailed version of this position. He boldly asserts that “the declaration of self-deification by Abu Yazid, the disciple of Abu Ali of Sind and Mansur al-Hallaj is without a doubt a borrowing from Indian Vedanta.”²⁵ He further argues that despite claims that ibn-‘Arabī's ideas reached India in the thirteenth century, any similarly pantheistic (a term he uses quite loosely) ideas found in the Punjab through the seventeenth century were inspired by Vaiṣṇava Vedanta, the influence of which was so great that converts to Islam began reconverting to Hinduism.²⁶ Sharda also draws vague connections between Sufism and the Buddhist and Nāth traditions of India. The gist of the argument is that anything noteworthy in Punjabi Sufism is due only to its Indian (i.e. non-Islamic) antecedents.

The creation of hybrid categories such as Sharda's “Vaiṣṇava Vedanta” presents special problems for interpreters. The larger categories of Islam and Hinduism are generally recognized and accepted means of classification, despite their drawbacks. Terms such as “Vedantic Sufi,” however, are not in common usage either in scholarly or popular works, and require more explanation. Interestingly, interpreters who make use of even these hybrid categories, whose meaning is by no

²⁴ Khan, pp. 17-53.

²⁵ Sharda, *Sufi Thought*, p. 70.

²⁶ Sharda, *Sufi Thought*, pp. 77, 181-183.

means self-evident, do not define or defend the categories themselves. Instead, these interpreters again turn to quasi-historical explanations of how Bullhe Shah came to adopt the stance of the “Vedantic Sufi.” The assumption is that Bullhe Shah began his life planted firmly within the category of Islam, and then gradually adopted elements from the category of Hinduism. The categories are taken as *prima facie*; thus everyone logically begins life situated within one or another. The implication is that categorical overlapping such as that argued for in Bullhe Shah’s case is unusual and requires explanation; there is no sense that the categories themselves might be inadequate for the interpretive task (or even that a person might from the very beginning exhibit “categorical overlapping”).

Such interpretations are most frequently explained through the mechanism of influence — Bullhe Shah was “influenced” by the Indian outlook, by Vedanta, by Vaiṣṇavism. The concept of influence, however, is highly problematic. First of all, how do we define influence?²⁷ Is someone who is influenced aware of having been influenced? Does influence always have a positive effect? How do we establish that influence has occurred? In the studies of Bullhe Shah, the criterion seems to be nothing more than an apparent similarity between a concept in his poetry and in a separately conceived tradition, with no need to establish causality. The concept of influence as employed in these analyses depends upon the presupposition of the validity of the categories invoked, for it is these abstract categories (“Indian outlook,” “Vedanta,” etc.) to which the interpreters assign

²⁷ The concept of influence has been the subject of much analysis and debate within literary criticism; the problematic aspects of defining and invoking influence are well-attested. The analyses of Bullhe Shah, however, make no reference to this vast literature. Two useful introductions to the use of the concept of “influence” in literary criticism are Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, “Figures in the Corpus: Theories of Influence and Intertextuality” in Clayton and Rothstein, eds., *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 3-36, and Louis A. Renza, “Influence” in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, eds., *Critical Terms for Literary Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 186-202.

the agency of influence, rather than to a more concrete entity such as a particular person, group, text, or even *Zeitgeist* (which, while still problematic, would be more plausible, defensible agents of influence).

The same questions hold true for other mechanisms purported to be at work in Bullhe Shah's poetry, such as borrowing and blending — the idea that Bullhe Shah borrowed something from Vedanta, or blended certain aspects of Sufism with certain aspects of Vedanta. Influence, borrowing, and blending all presuppose at least two separate, distinct traditions — Islam borrows from Hinduism or, more rarely, vice versa. But how can we establish what "Hinduism" and "Islam" were for the person allegedly doing the borrowing? We can't even be sure what "Hinduism" and "Islam" (and Vedanta, *Vaiṣṇava Vedanta*, orthodox Islam, etc.) mean to the authors who make such claims about Bullhe Shah, since none of them tells us how they understand these terms. Not only are these concepts presented with little or no supporting evidence, but their workings are apparently arbitrary. Influence, for example, seems to work only in one direction. From the perspective of those who define Bullhe Shah as a Vedantin of some variety, Islam was clearly subject to influence from Hinduism. Islam, however, has not in any way influenced Hinduism; Hinduism is inherently superior to Islam. Influence only "flows" downward; religious traditions only "borrow" things which they are lacking. These analyses which use concepts such as influence and borrowing are generally made long after the alleged influence or borrowing took place, and those who assert them rarely provide any specific evidence to support their claims. Instead, such arguments become the basis for doctrinal claims about Bullhe Shah which in fact tell us far more about the interpreters' own doctrinal stances than Bullhe Shah's.

It is in interpretations of Bullhe Shah built upon influence, borrowing, and blending that we find arguments for Bullhe Shah having passed through a series of developmental phases, culminating in "Vedantic Sufism" or "*Vaiṣṇava Vedantic Sufism*." The argument for developmental phases is a particularly ingenious tactic for dealing with the Bullhe Shah corpus, for any seeming philosophical incongruities may be explained as expressions from different phases of

Bullhe Shah's life. The best example of this strategy is Lajwanti Ramakrishna's presentation of the three phases of Bullhe Shah's mystic life. In the first phase, he learned basic Sufi doctrines from Inayat Shah, and composed verse that was "weak in thought and very commonplace." In the second phase, he "assimilated more of the Indian outlook," which included acceptance of some Vaiṣṇava ideas, and finally reached the third and final phase, in which he became a "firm believer in Advaita."²⁸ A strength of such an interpretive move is that it does not demand complete consistency of Bullhe Shah throughout his life; its greatest weakness, however, is that there is no evidence other than the poems themselves for assuming a series of developmental phases. Thus any such construction is arbitrary on a number of counts, for the interpreter must assume that there is indeed a single, historical figure, with a relatively fixed body of work, and that internal criteria alone are sufficient for identifying successive phases. Yet even if we accept that there is a fixed body of poetry composed by one Bullhe Shah, and that this poetry may be organized into different groups on the basis of the worldview expressed in the poetry, we have no means of determining how to place these groups.

Interpreters who place Bullhe Shah squarely within the category of Islam (as it is variously conceived) do so in part as a response, oftentimes very explicit, to those who see Bullhe Shah as having been influenced in some way by some form of Hinduism. In such accounts, Lajwanti Ramakrishna is singled out for particular criticism. Her critics' basic strategy is to use the same argumentative structure, but through adducing contrasting evidence. Bullhe Shah may well have passed through phases, they argue, but clearly the ultimate phase was one in which he espoused a "pure" Islam free from extra-categorical influences. Or, Bullhe Shah may well have been subject to influences, but all these influences came from within the Islamic tradition itself, and not from anywhere else. This strategy involves arguments for influence which are just as problematic as those described above, except that in these arguments, apparent similarities between ideas

²⁸ Ramakrishna, pp. 49-54.

found in Bullhe Shah's poems, and ideas found anywhere in the Sufi tradition, whether Bullhe Shah could plausibly have had any knowledge of them or not, are cited as the "true influences" on his thinking. Again, there are sweeping historical claims; rather than the influence of Vedanta, however, these interpreters invoke the widespread influence of ibn-'Arabi's theory of the unity of being [*wahdat al-wujūd*]. Here once again we learn more about the stance of the interpreter than we do about Bullhe Shah; the interpreter's energy has been expended largely upon making these categorical classifications work.

At this point, some might be tempted to dismiss the multiple interpretations of Bullhe Shah as the work of scholars whose communal or nationalist agendas have obscured principles of sound historical and literary interpretation, and search for more "objective" studies. But it is especially important to note that this style of interpretation permeates virtually everything written about Bullhe Shah, even in studies by scholars who presumably are not primarily concerned with a particular communal or nationalist program. First of all, the primary source of Bullhe Shah's poetry is in the very editions of his poetry which place him into different categories on the basis of varying communal agendas, and it is very hard to ignore the disparate interpretations. But at a deeper level, even those interpreters who challenge the merit of these analyses of Bullhe Shah do not question the very nature of the study itself — they make the same kinds of claims about categories, using concepts such as influence, etc. — and present analyses which are grounded in the very same assumptions about the relationship between biography and poetry, religious identity, and authorship, albeit with less communal hyperbole. Annemarie Schimmel, for example, is keenly aware of the biases at work in studies of Indian Sufi poets: "... a number of authors, particularly the Hindus... believe that here Indian advaita mysticism gained a complete victory over Islamic monotheism."²⁹ Pointing out the tendency among both Hindus and Western scholars of Sufism to see similarities between Sankara's Advaita Vedanta and ibn-'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujūd*, she asserts, "it

²⁹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 386-387.

is not correct to equate the two systems.”³⁰ While maintaining that there were indeed “Hindu influences” on the mystical poets of the Punjab and Sindh, her conclusion is that this literature is “unmistakably Islamic” because of its veneration of Muhammad.³¹ Thus while her discussion of the Punjabi Sufis is considerably more nuanced than that of many interpreters³², she still situates her analysis within the basic problematic framework of categories and the mechanisms by which they interact, such as influence. Similarly, Mustansir Mir, in a brief study of Bullhe Shah and Sultan Bahu, while noting the broad-based appeal of Bullhe Shah, argues that both Bullhe Shah and Sultan Bahu are “situated firmly within the Islamic tradition, and it is a mistake to think that they were influenced by the Hindu Vedantic tradition.”³³ While virtually anyone can appreciate some aspects of this poetry, Mir argues, in the end, it is “decidedly Islamic in structure and detail.”³⁴ Both Schimmel and Mir acknowledge the multiple interpretations of Bullhe Shah, dismiss rather abruptly the claims for significant “Hindu influence” on his poetry, and conclude by situating him within Islam, without indicating what the criteria for determining the Hindu or Islamic content of his poetry were.

We are thus left with varying bodies of work attributed to a man named Bullhe Shah, and we cannot be certain whether all the poems credited to him are actually the composition of a single historical figure. Yet while virtually everyone who writes about Bullhe Shah notes the difficulties inherent in the Bullhe Shah corpus, their analyses of his work nonetheless generally proceed on the assumption that we are in fact dealing with one single author. It is here that we need

³⁰ Schimmel, “Reflections on Popular Muslim Poetry,” p. 23.

³¹ Schimmel, “The Influence of Sufism on Indo-Muslim Poetry,” pp. 197-200.

³² Schimmel’s study of Islamic mystical poetry in vernacular languages provides a wealth of detail on the types of poetry which may indeed have played a role in shaping Bullhe Shah the historical figure as a poet; this is information not found in other studies of Bullhe Shah. See especially Chapter 4 of Schimmel’s *As Through a Veil*.

³³ Mir, “Teachings of Two Punjabi Sufi Poets,” pp. 520-521.

³⁴ Mir, p. 521.

to examine more critically the conceptions of authorship that are at work in studies of Bullhe Shah.

The Implications of the Concept of Authorship

The varying interpretations of Bullhe Shah, as I have described above, rely upon a series of unquestioned presuppositions and questionable argumentative strategies. At the heart of each of these strategies lies the uncritical assumption that the true subject of this analysis is a man named Bullhe Shah. These interpreters acknowledge that there are multiple interpretations of Bullhe Shah's life and work, but seem to assume that there can only be one true one. The key to finding the "real" Bullhe Shah amidst the variously constructed pretenders is to define Bullhe Shah the man. If interpreters can establish exactly when he lived, what he learned, and exactly which poems he composed, then the true, clear picture of his life and work will emerge.

This strategy depends upon an implicit concept of authorship, according to which the author is a single individual located in a specific time and place. As such, he is subject to forces such as the social and historical conditions understood to be in operation during his lifetime, and is exposed to a range of religious options conceived as being confined within specific categories. These factors lead to the author developing a particular identity and worldview, which he then expresses in his work. Once interpreters have identified this identity and worldview, it functions as a standard of consistency by which they can judge any works attributed to the author named Bullhe Shah.

This implicit standard of authorship exemplifies a particular form of what Michel Foucault termed the "author-function," a function found in literary analysis in which the concept of authorship becomes a means of interpreting a set of texts (and may also be a means of authentication, and therefore limitation).

The author explains the presence of certain events within a text, as well as their transformations, distortions, and their various modifications (and this through an author's biography or by reference to his particular point of view, in the analysis of his social preferences and his positions within a class...) The author also

constitutes a principle of unity in writing where any unevenness of production is ascribed to changes caused by evolution, maturation, or outside influence.³⁵

This conception of authorship clearly depends upon a single, fixed historical figure whose life and predilections may be seen as determining the content of his work; this figure is further seen as being either consistent, or subject to a process of intellectual development which will be manifested in the body of his work. Foucault noted that the roots of this conception of authorship lie in Christian exegesis and the attempt to authenticate or reject texts attributed to a single author. Of particular interest are the criteria for authenticity established by St. Jerome, according to which a body of work could be considered that of one author if it reflected (a) a standard of quality (an author's works will be of uniform quality), (b) a field of conceptual or theoretical coherence (the author will always adhere to the same theoretical positions), and (c) stylistic uniformity (there will be no significant variation in the author's style). The author was thus constructed as a definite historical figure in whom a series of events converged.³⁶ A similar process is clearly at work in constructions of Bullhe Shah as author, and Bullhe Shah's interpreters invoke criteria of authenticity that are remarkably similar to those set out by St. Jerome. The varying interpretations of Bullhe Shah as a definite historical figure become the basis for multiple claims about the true (i.e. doctrinally correct) nature of his poetry, each rooted in some conception of an ideal, dominant category, be it "Islam" or "Vedantic Sufism."

This concept of authorship which Bullhe Shah's interpreters apply has its roots in eighteenth-century western understandings of printed matter, when texts came to be regarded as intellectual property, their authors having certain rights but also responsibilities. To apply the concept of legal responsibility to the content of a text of course requires the concept of an author as a clearly identifiable, specific indi-

³⁵ Foucault, Michel, "What is an Author?" in Hazard Adams and Leroy Searles, eds., *Critical Theory since 1965* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986), p. 134.

³⁶ Foucault, "What Is an Author?" p. 144.

vidual, as well an understanding of the text itself as a fixed object. Yet the nature of the Bullhe Shah corpus makes this notion of authorship highly problematic.

For example, if interpreters are to apply a particular standard of “quality,” how is that standard determined? Would a standard level refer to expressions of particular philosophical positions, or formal patterns in the poetry? We need only recall the various criteria invoked in different editions, such as “force and simplicity,” disregard for meter, or metrical consistency, to see the difficulty with defining a standard for Bullhe Shah’s poetry. Further, is it realistic to assume that Bullhe Shah’s poems were all of the same level of quality? Couldn’t some of his poems be better than others? Even if we leave aside the question of developmental phases vs. complete uniformity in Bullhe Shah’s doctrine, must we assume that Bullhe Shah was completely consistent throughout his life, that he never experimented with different ideas in his poetry, or varied his forms of expression depending upon his audience? The assumption that there is a recoverable body of poetry composed by a consistent, stylistically unchanging, doctrinally fixed historical figure named Bullhe Shah is problematic, and yet it is upon this assumption that constructions of Bullhe Shah the author depend. Further, these constructions of Bullhe Shah as author, made long after the fact, are nonetheless positioned as prior — in other words, the particular construction itself becomes a means of explanation and interpretation.

This construction of Bullhe Shah as historical author is especially important for assigning him a specific communal identity, whether it be orthodox Muslim, rebellious Sufi, or Vedantic Sufi. In each of these characterizations, Bullhe Shah is portrayed as a man shaped by specific historical factors in his immediate environment. That Bullhe Shah lived in the presence of religious traditions that are *now* labelled “Islam” and “Hinduism” (however such traditions may be defined) is a reasonable assumption. But were these meaningful categories to Bullhe Shah? How can we establish what he knew about them, how people then understood them, what he thought about each? To answer such questions, we are led back in a circle to his work itself — work

which, as nearly all concede, cannot be conclusively established as the product of this one historical figure. And yet what all those who define a particular Bullhe Shah do is to extract passages from his poetry to demonstrate the "Hindu influence" or the predominance of "orthodox Islam" in the life and work of this one man.

The strategies interpreters have typically used leave us with conflicting portrayals of Bullhe Shah's life and work. Yet the very existence of so many portrayals makes clear Bullhe Shah's importance in Punjabi literature. Why is he claimed by Punjabis of different religious communities? What is at stake when interpreters place him within a particular category? It is not enough simply to identify the problems with the concept of authorship or the conception of Hinduism and Islam as separate religious traditions and then move on with yet another interpretation. To answer such questions requires developing new strategies for studying Bullhe Shah, his poetry, and his interpreters.

Reinterpreting Bullhe Shah and His Interpreters

What can we learn from the various constructions of Bullhe Shah the author? Why does he occupy such an important place in Punjabi religion? To begin to answer these questions, we must begin our study of the poet and his interpreters with a new set of assumptions:

a. *There are multiple "Bullhe Shabs."* There is as yet no widely accepted, definitive account of Bullhe Shah's life. Even if new sources of information were discovered, and it became possible to construct a reasonably authentic, historically defensible account of the life of Bullhe Shah as a historical figure, such an account would likely have little connection to, or change, the various popular understandings of his life. While we may fairly safely assume that there was indeed a historical figure, his true biography may no longer be recoverable, and it may no longer be the most important issue. Rather than continuing to interpret Bullhe Shah by relying upon the notion of a single correct reading of his life, it is more useful to look at the multiple

biographies that already exist. What do they tell us about what people see as being important about Bullhe Shah? In what ways do the versions of Bullhe Shah differ, and in what ways are they similar? How do they affect the various versions of the Bullhe Shah corpus that exist? How do these similarities and differences relate to contemporary debates about national and communal identity? If we accept the concept that Bullhe Shah's readers and listeners create their own Bullhe Shahs, we can develop a new conception of Bullhe Shah as an "author" variously created and recreated within different discursive spaces (e.g. the various discussions of national, communal, and regional identity in contemporary Pakistan and India). This, in turn, will allow us to consider a crucial question: why is Bullhe Shah's name so powerful?³⁷ In a recent study of Sufi and bhakti poetry, Thomas de Bruijn suggests that it is useful to consider medieval Indian poets not just as historical figures, but also as "rhetorical personae." In the time between a historical poet's creative work, and its subsequent recording in manuscript form, a persona develops which refers not only to the rhetorics of the poetry attributed to the poet, but also to the "saintly image of the poet developed in popular devotion."³⁸ De Bruijn's concept of the rhetorical persona is a useful way of considering the function and importance of a poet's name as the corpus of poetry attributed to the poet and the biographical traditions about the poet expand.

b. *Multiple Bullhe Shahs have created multiple bodies of poetry.* Uncovering Bullhe Shah the historical figure is not the key to understanding Bullhe Shah's role in Punjabi religion. Bullhe Shah the beloved poet is in a sense a work in progress, and accepting this notion allows us to further develop a new way of looking at the poetry

³⁷ Hawley ("Author and Authority") argues that in much medieval Indian poetry, the poet's name is used not so much as a mark of individual authorship, but as a means of invoking the authority associated with the poet's name. Ali Asani ("The Isma'ili *Gināns*") has identified a similar process in Isma'ili *ginān* literature, in which poems of apparently relatively recent origin are attributed to much earlier authors.

³⁸ de Bruijn, p. 1.

attributed to him. The corpus of Bullhe Shah poetry itself is also a work in progress, always shaped in part by the perspective of those who present it (through editing a text, through reading a text, through performing or listening to the performance of his work). A.K. Ramanujan identified a similar process at work in different tellings of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The basic plot, characters, and other elements in the tale function as a “pool of signifiers (like a gene pool).” Different tellings of the story “not only relate to prior texts directly, to borrow or refute, but they relate to each other through this common code or common pool. Every author, if one may hazard a metaphor, dips into it and brings out a unique crystallization, a new text with a unique texture and a fresh context.”³⁹ Using Ramanujan’s terms, then, both Bullhe Shah and the poetry attributed to him themselves become a similar sort of “pool of signifiers.” There are common elements within it, but what different interpreters take from this pool, and the narrative that they construct to relate those elements, may differ radically. Nonetheless, each is aware of working from within the same pool of material. This view of the corpus allows us to ask different, and potentially more fruitful questions. What kinds of poems are found in different editions of Bullhe Shah’s work? Is there a constant core set of poems that appears in collections with different agendas?

c. *Definitions of Islam and Hinduism are likewise inconstant and multiformed, shaped by the perspective (in both time and space) of those who present them.* Rather than focusing on placing Bullhe Shah in a category, we should use the multiple versions of his poetic corpus as a means of understanding how such categories are constructed and used. Would someone hearing or reading the line “there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim” in Bullhe Shah’s time have understood it in the same way someone might today? What is at stake when interpreters claim that Bullhe Shah’s true inspiration comes from Hinduism, and not Islam? Why is Bullhe Shah so often used for this purpose?

³⁹ Ramanujan, “Three Hundred *Rāmāyaṇas*,” p. 46.

The Role of Performance

If we accept the fluidity and multiplicity of understandings of Bullhe Shah, his poetry, and his audience, we can also ask important questions about the performative context of his work. Most interpreters have treated the performance of Bullhe Shah's poetry as a source of disruption of the poetic corpus. Through performance, the hypothetical Ur-text, pure, bound, a static object, becomes defiled as performers take verses out of context, interpolate, change meters, and vary syntax and vocabulary on the basis of their own dialects. The written text is taken as primary and definitive; performers break its boundaries, and deviate from the true text. Yet at the same time, the poetic corpus itself is understood to be first and foremost oral — according to virtually every version of Bullhe Shah's life, he sang his poems, and they were initially transmitted orally.⁴⁰ Many editors note the existence and importance of many as yet unpublished or unknown Bullhe Shah poems, suggesting that the oral tradition of transmission is still vital. If we consider these factors from a purely practical perspective, the underlying assumption of a single, implicit Ur-text doesn't make sense. As a useful analogy, we might consider a teacher's development of a single lecture for an introductory course. The teacher prepares a lecture, and delivers it to students. The lecture may exist in some written form, such as notes, but it is designed to be performed before an audience. The next time the teacher teaches that course, she will presumably take into account a number of factors — students' questions, their apparent level of comprehension, new information and new circumstances, changes in her own thinking — and revise the lecture accordingly. Similarly, even if we accept the idea of Bullhe Shah as a single, historical figure, who performed his poems over a period of time, then it seems reasonable to assume that Bullhe Shah himself might have revised individual poems (so that

⁴⁰ There is some debate as to whether the historical figure Bullhe Shah actually created manuscripts of his poetry, or if he never wrote them or had them written at all. According to Ramakrishna (p. 46), there were original manuscripts, but a fire in the house of Bullhe Shah's descendants destroyed them.

there could have been alternate versions in circulation even during his life), that he might have expressed different ideas at different periods in his life (thus creating a body of work that was not doctrinally consistent), and that he might have geared his poems to different audiences (thus some might indeed use “Hindu” names for god, others include Quranic passages; some might be relatively simple, others philosophically more sophisticated).

It is also essential to think about the role of Bullhe Shah’s audience. To a great extent, the continued power and popularity of Bullhe Shah rests upon performances of his work. If we return to the analogy of the teacher’s introductory lecture, here we should imagine the students’ lecture notes. What did each student take away from the lecture? What did they find most important, most interesting? What did they disregard? How did their prior knowledge affect the way that they understood (or misunderstood) the teacher’s lecture? Every teacher has stories of the garbled versions of her words that appear on exams. And if we imagine looking at notes from different versions of that same (although revised) lecture over several years, the possible variant interpretations multiply. If Bullhe Shah performed his poems over a period of years, revising and adding new poems, the corpus of poetry even during his lifetime would not have fit the image that his interpreters seem to have of it, if it were indeed possible to recover those original forms. And if we factor in the further transmission of his poems through performance, and later through manuscripts, and printed texts, the corpus of course would become even more complex — as it indeed is in reality. Its complexity and apparent inconsistencies, however, do not necessarily mean that entire portions of it are inauthentic and therefore to be disregarded. Bullhe Shah the performer, those who performed his poetry, those who listened to it and read it, have all had a role in creating the corpus of poetry that is now attributed to Bullhe Shah. If we are to take Bullhe Shah’s importance as a poet seriously, and ask why he is beloved by different religious communities, we should take seriously all the poetry that goes under his name, even if it is possible to establish that Bullhe Shah as a single historical figure did not compose all of it.

The “Portable” Bullhe Shah

What do listeners and readers bring to the experience of hearing or reading Bullhe Shah’s poems? Presumably, each brings his or her own religious identity and religious sensibilities. Those who find Bullhe Shah’s poems personally meaningful most likely place those poems within the framework of their own religious understanding — Bullhe Shah’s poems are thus “portable” into different frameworks. If Sikhs find Bullhe Shah’s poems moving, perhaps it is because they equate sentiments expressed in the poems with sentiments from the Sikh tradition, as is suggested by the number of articles comparing Bullhe Shah and the words of the Sikh gurus in recent publications from the Indian Punjab.⁴¹ If Vedantins are inspired by certain Bullhe Shah poems, then perhaps it is because they find in those poems ideas that fit their own understanding of Vedanta. Muslims who respond favorably to Bullhe Shah’s poems of course can also fit many poems into a framework that suits their own visions of Islam. These responses, in turn, generate varying senses of the “real” Bullhe Shah, relative to the interpretive framework the reader or listener brings to the poems. It is no wonder that there are so many different interpretations of the poet. What is it about his poetry that makes this possible?

In the most famous of the poems attributed to Bullhe Shah, the poet straightforwardly expresses his longing for god. The basic themes are the pain of separation from god, dissatisfaction with worldly, material life, and the pretense of learning. These poems, with a vocabulary likely familiar to most speakers of Punjabi,⁴² express concepts which may be placed into different interpretive frameworks. Indeed a great

⁴¹ See, for example, Kala Singh Bedi, “*Bullhe Shāh de Kalām dā Gurbāñī nāl Tulnātmak Adhiain*” in Rattan Singh Jaggi, ed., *Khoj Patrikā, Sāīn Bullhe Shah Ank* (Patiala: Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, 1991), pp. 134-150, who argues for the profound influence of Sikh ideas on Bullhe Shah, and the chapter “*Bullhe Shāh te Gurbāñī*” (pp. 169-182) in Bhāshā Vibhāg Punjāb’s *Bullhe Shāh: Jīvan te Racnā*, which points out differences between Bullhe Shah’s thought and that of the Sikh gurus, but still finds them worthy of comparison.

⁴² In many editions of Bullhe Shah’s poems, there are compositions which include a fairly sophisticated Perso-Arabic vocabulary, and references to the Quran as well

deal of the appeal of Bullhe Shah's poetry may lie in its very portability — the very fact that it lends itself to so many interpretive frameworks. Perhaps most popular are the poems in which Bullhe Shah sings as Hir, the beautiful young woman longing for her true love, Rānjhā. The tragic romance of Hir and Rānjhā is a part of the shared folklore of all Punjabis, and like Bullhe Shah's poetry, it too exists in many different versions, and has been interpreted on many different levels, from simple love story to complex mystical allegory about the soul's journey towards god.⁴³

I've cried out "Rānjhā, Rānjhā!" so many times that now I've become Rānjhā myself.

Just call me Dhido Rānjhā — don't bother calling me Hir anymore.⁴⁴

In these lines, Bullhe Shah imagines himself as Hir, asserting her complete identity with her beloved Rānjhā. Lines such as these are easily portable into different philosophical frameworks. A Vedantin might see this passage as reflecting the union of the individual self [*ātman*] with the universal reality [*brahman*]; it might evoke for a Vaiṣṇava the pain of separation from god [*viraha*] and the joy of a possible future union; a Sufi versed in ibn-‘Arabi’s writings might find it a good expression of *wahdat al-wujūd*, according to which the true self is in fact a manifestation of Allah. In the world of philosophical texts and treatises, one who studied ibn-‘Arabi’s theory of *wahdat al-wujūd* and its attendant technical, philosophical apparatus might not immediately see affinities with the monistic philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, or the pain of separation from God felt by the Vaiṣṇava

as Persian literature. But these do not seem to be the most popular of Bullhe Shah's poems. Indeed a potentially useful field for future study would be to identify the poems most commonly performed and found in various editions of Bullhe Shah's poetry, and to confirm whether the most popular poems are in fact those with the least technical, communally “loaded” vocabulary.

⁴³ For a brief introduction to the Hir/Rānjhā tradition, see Rinehart, “Hir/Rānjhā” in Peter Claus and Margaret Mills, eds., *Bibliography of South Asian Folklore* (Garland Press, forthcoming).

⁴⁴ Punjabi from Luther, p. 102. For other versions of this poem, see Atam Singh, pp. 108-9, and Ramakrishna, p. 63.

devotee. At that level, each tradition has its own history and sense of identity, its own vocabulary, its own idiosyncrasies and particularities. Yet a reader or listener familiar with the basic ideas of any of these traditions could certainly find affinities between them and many of the basic sentiments expressed in Bullhe Shah's poetry. Thus many of the ideas most commonly expressed in the poetry attributed to Bullhe Shah are in fact "portable" into different religious and philosophical frameworks, creating a vast potential audience. As a result, those who admire him have sought to claim his as a champion of their own particular worldview. In so doing, they continually fashion new and often conflicting Bullhe Shahs.

Conclusions

Bullhe Shah is clearly an important figure in the religious development in the Punjab, both as a poet in his own right, and as an example of how interpreters have sought to understand that development. Despite the wide-ranging and conflicting interpretations of his life and work, nearly all share the same underlying methodological framework. This framework, with its unquestioned assumptions about biography, textual corpus, religious categorization, and authorship, has dictated the kinds of questions that people have asked about Bullhe Shah, and the answers that they have provided. Yet the many answers about who Bullhe Shah was, what he composed, and how he lived his life, leave us with a seemingly bewildering array of conflicting portrayals.

As an alternative, we can approach the poet's life and work with the understanding that we will find multiple Bullhe Shahs, and multiple versions of his poetic corpus, each constructed with elements from the same "pool of signifiers," but carried into different discursive spaces. This provides us not only with a way of dealing with existing divergent interpretations, but also of asking new, and potentially more meaningful questions about his role in Punjabi religions. If there are indeed multiple Bullhe Shahs, then we can ask what exactly each is like, and which groups he represents. If there are multiple bodies

of poetry, we can both describe and compare them. How do they differ? What do they have in common — what exactly is in the “pool of signifiers?” We might discover that there is a common thread of expression running through the many editions of Bullhe Shah’s work, and gain new insight into shared aspects of Punjabi religious experience. To suggest that there are multiple Bullhe Shahs does not mean that we must reject entirely the concept of a single person, but rather that in order to understand Bullhe Shah’s importance, we must reorient our approach to the many ways in which this figure has been remembered. After all, Bullhe Shah’s interpreters assume that they are all talking about the same person — the disagreement lies in their interpretation of who that person was, and what kind of poetry he composed.

The notion of multiple Bullhe Shahs could allow our studies to take on a historical dimension as well. How have interpretations of Bullhe Shah changed over time (e.g. colonial/post-colonial)? What does this tell us about the ongoing development of the self-understanding of different religious communities in the Punjab, as well as their relationships with one another? A historically sensitive critique of Bullhe Shah’s interpreters could also allow us to develop new means of categorization for his work and the work of other poets. Such categories would give us new ways of viewing religious belief and practice in the Punjab. There could be great value in studying how “Bullhe Shah’s” life and work have been constantly reshaped and renewed, and what these reformulations tell us about those who continue to create them.

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BEARING THE 'BARE FACTS' OF RITUAL. A CRITIQUE OF
JONATHAN Z. SMITH'S STUDY OF THE BEAR CEREMONY BASED
ON A STUDY OF THE AINU *IYOMANTE*

TAKESHI KIMURA

Review article

Summary

A few years ago, Benjamin Ray criticized Jonathan Z. Smith's study of the bear hunting ritual. In this article, I further examine and develop a criticism of Smith's theory of ritual. Since he presents the Ainu bear ceremony as the exemplar case and bases his theory of ritual on his interpretation of it, I review and examine the available ethnographies of the Ainu bear ceremony *Iyomante*. My reading of them calls into question both Smith's presentation of the ethnography of the bear ceremony and his interpretation of its meaning. Smith's focus on the ritual killing as the core of the Ainu bear ceremony as the perfect hunt to resolve incongruity between the mythical ideology and the hunting practice is based upon his not taking into consideration the Ainu religious world of meanings. From my study of the Ainu bear ceremony, I maintain that the ritual dismemberment of the bear and the ritual decoration of the bear's skull constitute the core of the meaning of the ritual. To interpret the religious meaning of this ritual, I point out the necessity for considering the Ainu view of personhood and ontological understanding of the "bear." In my interpretation of this core part of the bear ceremony, the material form, that is the bear, of the Ainu deity is ritually transformed into its spiritual mode and then sent back to the mountain whence from it originally came.

Recently a newspaper reported the amazing discovery of some cave drawings in Chauvet, near Marseilles in France, dating from 30,340 to 32,410 years ago. Interestingly, the newspaper article also mentioned an astonishing ritual remain found in the cave, "a stone slab with the skull of a bear placed on it, as though it were an altar."¹ What the bear skull of the Chauvet meant to the people who used it is no longer clear to us, but the ritual killing of bears has attracted the attention of many anthropologists and scholars

¹ New York Times, June 8, 1995: A4.

of religions since A. Irving Hallowell's classic study.² Among historians of religions, Jonathan Z. Smith used a Siberian case of ritual killing of a bear in order to investigate the paradigmatic significance of this ritual action for the mundane practice of the hunting.³ His theory remains influential and is appealed to in a recent article on Aztec human sacrifice.⁴ However, a few years ago another historian of religions, Benjamin Ray, criticized Smith's interpretation.⁵ After critically reviewing these two scholars' studies of the ritual killing of a bear, I have found that there are serious methodological and interpretive problems with them. In this essay, I will challenge these scholars' interpretations by a close analysis of the Ainu bear ceremony (*Iyomante*) which both Smith and Ray take to be a typical example.⁶ By focusing on the *Iyomante* and interpreting its religious meanings in detail, I will show that Smith and Ray both ignore a fundamental religious aspect of the *Iyomante* which calls their interpretations into serious question.

In his article entitled "The Bare Facts of Ritual," Jonathan Z. Smith views ritual as "a human labor, struggling with matters of incongruity."⁷ He uses ethnographic reports of Siberian hunters' ritual hunting and killing of a bear as his exemplum of ritual. The ritual hunt may be divided into four main parts. First, the hunters perform the ritual "preparation for the hunt" designed to insure the success of the hunt, including mimetic dances "prefiguring" the hunt, the stabbing of an "effigy" of the animal, invocations to the Master of the Animals, purification of the hunters, and learning a ceremonial hunt

² A. Irving Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere," *American Anthropologist*, n.s. 28, no. 1 (1926): 1-175.

³ Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982): 53-65.

⁴ David Carrasco, "Give Me Some Skin: The Charisma of the Aztec Warrior," *History of Religions* 35, no. 1, (1995): 2-3.

⁵ Benjamin Ray, "The Koyukon Bear Party and the 'Bare Facts' of Ritual," *Numen* 38, no. 2 (1991): 151-176.

⁶ Smith refers to pages 106 to 135 of Hallowell's article which mainly describes the bear ceremonies of the Gilyak and the Ainu. By referring to Hallowell, Ray writes that "In the view of Hallowell and others, this festival [a periodic bear festival] 'clearly differentiates the people of this district from other tribes of Asia and America' who do not perform this rite." *Ibid.*, 156.

⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, 57.

language. Secondly, the hunters perform a transitional rite as they move from the human social world into the forest realm of animals and spirits. They ritually ask permission from the forest to hunt the animals. At this juncture, Smith points out that “the complex of host/guest/visitor/gift comprises the articulated understanding of the hunt,” in which the forest is treated as a host, the hunters as a guest, and the animals as visitors and gifts.⁸ Thirdly, the hunters ritually kill the bear according to strict rules of etiquette. The animal should be killed in hand-to-hand, face-to-face combat. Fourthly, the hunters strategically and ritually retreat from the world of the forest and return to that of the human, bearing the corpse of the slain animal. The villagers perform a ritual purification for the hunters on their arrival at the village.

After summarizing the ritual scenario of this hunting ritual, Smith points out that in practice most hunters do not fight the bear face to face. Rather, they use traps, pitfalls, self-triggering bows, snares, and, recently, shotguns. Noting the discrepancy between the ritual prescription and the practical realities of hunting bear, Smith argues that these incongruities hold the key to the meaning of the ritual action.

Smith suggests that the hunters perform the bear ceremony as a means of resolving the incongruity between the hunters’ ideological statements of how they *ought* to hunt and their actual behavior. In the bear ceremony, the hunters can “get it right,” as it were, by following the ritual prescription for killing the bear. Smith summarizes the generalized ritual scenario of the bear ceremony as follows:

A young, wild bear cub is taken alive, brought to a village, and caged. It is treated as an honored guest, with high courtesy and displays of affection, at times being adopted by a human family. After two or three years, the festival is held. The bear is roped and taken on a farewell walk through the village. It is made to dance and play and to walk on its hind legs. Then it is carefully tied down in a given position and ceremonially addressed. It is slain, usually by being shot in the heart at close range; sometimes, afterward, it is strangled. The body is then divided and eaten with ceremonial etiquette (the same rules that pertain to the consumption of game). Its soul is enjoined to return to its ‘Owner’ and report how well it has been treated.⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

In short, Smith regards the bear ceremony as the performative representation of the perfect hunt, which the hunters do not and cannot realize in normal practice. Hence, he concludes, "Ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are in such a way that this ritualized perfection is recollected in the ordinary, uncontrolled, course of things."¹⁰ Smith's general theory of ritual emerges from his interpretation of the bear ceremony. Thus, if his interpretation of the meaning of the bear ceremony turns out to be tainted by serious problems, his theory of ritual will have to be reexamined critically.

The Ritual Text of the Iyomante

The Ainu *Iyomante* is a very complex ceremony, consisting of a variety of rituals, myths and symbols which vary from area to area in history.¹¹ For my presentation of a summary of the *Iyomante*, while I acknowledge the recent scholarly debate concerning the authority and objectivity of ethnographic text,¹² it is sufficient to point out that there are three main chronological groups of ethnographies: those from the pre-Meiji era,¹³ those from the Meiji era

¹⁰ Ibid., 63.

¹¹ Before the deterioration of the Ainu social structure, the *Iyomante* was carried out by a local territorial society, the *Shine itokpa* group, which was composed of several villages along the river. The *Shine itokpa* group was a patrilineal kin group and shared the common design of *ikashi itokpa* and the common ritual procedure, *kamuy nomi*. They shared a common head of the group, a common territory of salmon's spawning area, the salmon ceremony, and an obligation to cooperate in building new houses. Watanabe Hitoshi, "Ainu no kumamatsuri no shakaiteki kinou narabini sono hattenni kansuru seitaiteki yoin," *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 29, no. 3 (1964): 208-216.

¹² Here I refer to works by Johannes Fabian, *Time and Other, How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), James Clifford and George E. Marcus, ed., *Writing Culture, The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), and Talal Asad, *Anthropology & the Colonial Encounter* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1973). I acknowledge that to read the ethnographies of the *Iyomante* critically, it is necessary to discuss the motivations of those who traveled to Hokkaido and reported their observations of the Ainu society, the political and epistemological stances which determined their perspective on the Ainu life and the Ainu people's socio-historical situation at the time the ethnographies were written.

¹³ Pre-Meiji studies include: Matsumiya Kanzan, "Ezo Danhitsu ki" (1710); Sakakura Genjiro, "Hokkai Zuihitsu" (1739); Matsumae Hironaga, "Matsumaeshi"

to the end of WWII,¹⁴ and those from the post-war period.¹⁵ While I as-

(1781); Hezutsu Tosaku, “Toyuki” (1784); Sato Genrokuro, “Ezo Shui” (1786); Mogami Tokunai, “Ezo Zoshi” (1789); “Kai Akakuma no satsuri no koto” (1790); Hata Awagimaro, “Ezo Kenbunshi” (1790); “Ezo Shima Kikan”(1799); Ouchi Yoan, “Tokaiyawa”(1861); and Matsumae Tokuhiro, “Ezoshima Kikan Hochu” (1863). Frazer cites an earliest published account from 1652, but I have been unable to locate it, see James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1 volume, abridged edition, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1950): 590-93.

¹⁴ These include: Scheube, “Der Bärencultus und die Bärenfeste der Ainu” in *Mittheilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur-und Völkerkunde Ostasiens* 3, Heft 22 (1880): 44-51; Isabella L. Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan, an Account of Travels on Horseback in the Interior including Visits to the Aborigines of Yezo and the Shrines of Nikko and Ise*, 2 v. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1880); Edward Greey, *The Bear-Worshippers of Yezo* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1884); Sawada Sesshu's drawings of the *Iyomante*, “Hokkaido dojin kumamatsuri” in *Fuzoku Gaho*, 23 (1889): 11-13 & 28 (1891): 11; Mitsuoka Shin'ichi, *Ainu no Ashiato* (Hakuro: Miyoshi Shoten, 1962), originally published earlier; Sasaki Chozaemon, “Ainu no Kumagari to Kumamatsuri” in Kono Motomichi, ed., *Ainushi Shiryou* 5 (1980), originally published by Sasaki Hoeido in 1926; John Batchelro, *Ainu Life and Lore: Echoes of a Departing Race* (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1927); Yoshida Iwao, “Ainu to kuma,” *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 1, no. 3 (1935): 50-73; Inukai Tetsuo’s “Ainu no okonau kuma no kaibo,” *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 1, no.3 (1935): 74-82; Inukai Tetsuo and Natori Takemitsu, “Iyomante no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (1)” *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* no. 2 (1939): 237-271 and “Iyomante no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (2)” *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* no. 3 (1940): 79-135; Natori Takemitsu, “Sarunkuru Ainu no Kumaokuri ni okeru kamigami no yurai to nusa,” *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* no. 4 (1941): 35-112, and *Funkawan Ainu no Hoge* (Sapporo: Hoppo Bunka Shuppansha, 1945); and Neil James, *Petticoat Vagabond in Ainu Land and Up and Down Eastern Asia* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942). A German scholar of religion, Hans Haas, wrote an article on the Ainu, “Die Ainu und ihre Religion,” *Bilderatlas zur Religionsgeschichte* (1925): 1-18.

¹⁵ These include: Joseph M. Kitagawa, “Ainu Bear Festival (Iyomante),” *History of Religions* 1, no. 1, (1958): 95-151; Neil Gordon Munro, *Ainu Creed and Cult* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Ifukube Muneo, “Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (1)” *Gakuen Ronshu* 8 (1964): 1-32, “Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (2)” *Gakuen Ronshu* 9 (1965): 29-56, “Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (3),” *Gakuen Ronshu* 10 (1966): 1-21; Sato Naotaro, “Kushiro Ainu no Iyomande (kuma okuri) (1)-(23),” *Dokushojin* 4, no. 2 to 6, no. 3 (1955-57); Iyomante Jikko Iinkai, ed., *Iyomante, Kawakami chiho*

sume that it is crucially important to interpret the *Iyomante* in its historical context, for the purpose of this paper, I choose to present the general ritual contexts of the *Iyomante* here.¹⁶

On the preparation day, the Ainu men get together to create prayer sticks (*inau*) for the alter (*nusa-san*),¹⁷ for the god of fire (*ape-fuchi-kamuy*),¹⁸

no Kumaokuri no kiroku (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1985); Fujimura Hisakazu, "Ainu no rei okuri (1)-(18)," *Gakuto* 88, no. 1 to 89, no. 6 (1988-89) and Sasaki Toshikazu, "Iyomante ko-Ainu shi jojutsu no kanosei wo saguru," *Oto to Eizo to Moji ni yoru "Taikei"* *Nihon Rekishi to Geino* 14 (1989): 145-208.

¹⁶ From my review of the ethnographies of the *Iyomante*, it is possible to say that, even if the ritual structure of the *Iyomante* remained largely unchanged due to the conscious effort of some Ainu to retain or restore the ritual, the "meaning" of the *Iyomante* ritual performances changes over time with the shifting political, economic, social and religious circumstances of the Ainu. The meaning of the ritual is not uniform across time and space nor is it to be found by simply analyzing the structure of the ritual process. Rather, one must analyze the performative contexts and occasions in history. I will take this issue up on another occasion.

¹⁷ According to Munro, the fundamental Ainu religious concepts are *ramat*, *kamuy* and *inau*. The nearest English equivalents of *ramat* (literally, "heart") are "soul" or "spirit." When living things such as men, animals, trees, and plants, die, *ramat* leaves them and goes elsewhere, but it does not perish. *Inau* is usually described as whittled and shaved wooden sticks and solid stumps of wood which resemble batons or wands. *Inau* embody *ramat*, credited with power, whether derived from the ancestors or from the spiritual potency of impressive natural phenomena. It is ritually addressed as messenger between human beings and *kamuy*, or between *kamuy*. Neil G. Munro, *Ainu Creed and Cult* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963): 7-15.

¹⁸ The term *kamuy* refers not only to the Ainu deities, but also to numerous independent spirits of lesser degree. This term is also applied to anything remarkable, incomprehensible, or even exceptionally beautiful. *Kamuy* are loosely classified as good or beautiful, bad or hostile, and mischievous but not necessarily malevolent. According to Munroe there are eight classes of *kamuy*: 1) Remote *kamuy*, called *pase kamuy*, are counted as high gods. They include, *Kando-koro kamuy* (Possessor of the Sky), *Kamu Fuchi*, *Oina Kamuy* and others. Most of the *pase kamuy* are believed to have descended from the sky and will return there in the fullness of time. 2) Among the accessible and trustworthy *kamuy*, the nominal chief of them is *Shiramba kamuy*, Upholder of the World, *Kamuy Fuchi*, the Supreme Ancestress and also known as *Abe Kamuy*, *kamuy* of fire, *Nusa-koro Kamuy* and others. 3) These *kamuy* are invoked after prayer to *Kamuy Fuchi* and *Nusa-koro Kamuy*. They are *Mintara-koro Kamuy* (Possessor of the precincts) and *Ru-koro Kamuy* (the *kamuy* of

the god of the threshold (*apa-cha-kamuy*), the god of the house (*chise-kor-kamuy*) and others, and to make ceremonial arrows with decorations (*eper-aii*), ceremonial gifts for the bear (*eper-shike*), and finally to prepare liquor and other ritual necessities. Then, they offer prayers to the god of fire (*ape-fuchi-kamuy*) for the success of the *Iyomante*. In the *Iyomante*, prayer (*kamuy nomi*) is offered to the god of fire (*ape-fuchi-kamuy*) as in other religious occasions, because *ape-fuchi-kamuy* is a mediator between humans and the *kamuy* in the *kamuy* world. Men and women perform various dances and songs and recite sacred stories of the cultural hero (*oina*), as well as other sacred and non-sacred stories (*yukar*).

On the second day, the main ritual is performed. Prayers (*kamuy nomi*) are offered to various important *kamuy* both within the house and outdoors. Inside the house, *kamuy nomi* are offered to *ape-fuchi-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of fire) and *chise-kor-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the house). Outside the house, a ritual space is constructed and the treasures are placed beside the altar.¹⁹ Sitting in front of the altar (*nusa-san*), a group of men offer *kamuy nomi* to *kotan-kor-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the village), *shiranba-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the earth), *nupuri-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the mountain), and other important *kamuy*. After these prayers are over, the people attach a rope to the bear's neck and take it out of its cage. Women sing and dance in a circle around the bear. Some food is given to the bear and a prayer is

the male privy). 4) All animals have *ramat* but not all are *kamuy*. Those theriomorphic *kamuy* include some animals such as a bear, a wolf and a fox, some birds such as an eagle owl, a black woodpecker, and a crow, a spider, and some aquatic creatures such as a fresh-water crab. 5) Spirit helpers and personal *kamuy* include the skulls of certain *kamuy* in an animal form. The skulls are smoked, cleaned and partly wrapped in curled shavings (*inau kike*), which are stuffed into the cranial cavity, eye sockets, and mouth. Among many types, the skull of a good fox is favored. 6) Mischievous and malicious *kamuy* include many malicious and malignant spirits that haunt the wilds. Threatening spirits lurk in the woods, crags, gullies, marshes, and in the pools and eddies of rivers. 7) The *kamuy* of pestilence are also held to be malignant, but one was so overwhelmingly frightful that no Ainu dared to call it an evil spirit. 8) Among the things of unutterable horror, the most noteworthy is the caterpillar. *Ibid.*, 16-27.

¹⁹ The treasure at the ritual scene is a key to the Ainu perception of space. Matsumae Hironaga already mentioned the existence of the treasure at the ritual scene in 1781. Matsumae Hironaga, "Matsumaeshi," in *Hokumon Sosho*, ed. Otomo Kisaku, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 1972): 116.

offered to the bear. They then drag the bear around, exciting him. The men, women, and children present become excited, too. Then, the men shoot the decorated arrows at the bear. The ritual master shoots the fatal arrow into the bear. His wife, who has taken care of the bear cub, weeps, as do other women. The men then strangle the bear to death, using two branches placed around its neck. They next take the dead body of the bear to the altar, give gifts to the dead bear, and sit next to each other. The women sit behind the men. Again a prayer is offered to *ape-fuchi-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of fire) and *eper-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the bear cub). Before they dismember the body of the bear, a prayer is again offered. Then, under the guidance of the elders, the bear's body is dismembered by several men. The bear's head (*maratt*) attached with skin is brought into the house through the east window. Prayers are again offered to *ape-fuchi-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of fire) and the bear (*maratt*) inside. A feast is held. The sword and crane dances are performed by the men, singing and recitation of *yukar* and *oina* follows, and women's dances (*upopo*) are performed. The bear's flesh is then boiled and shared by the people in a communal meal.

On the last day of the *Iyomante*, the main part of the ritual inside the house is called *um-memke* (skinning the head and decorating the skull with *inau* and gifts). Smith and Ray both completely ignore this most important part of the ritual. Prayer is offered to *ape-fuchi-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of fire) and the bear's *kamuy*. The decorated skull is placed facing east on a Y-shaped tree and a ritual to send the *kamuy* off to the mountain is performed. Again, a communal feast is held. The *Iyomante* is concluded by turning the skull toward the village, indicating the *kamuy* has returned home to the *kamuy* land.

Theoretical and Methodological Arguments

Benjamin Ray, in his article entitled "The Koyukon Bear Party and the 'Bare Facts' of Ritual," severely criticizes Jonathan Z. Smith's presentation of the bear hunting ritual and his interpretation of it.²⁰ Ray makes the following points: (1) Neither Irving Hallowell's comparative study of the bear ceremony nor Lot-Falks' study of Siberian hunters, upon which Smith constructs his interpretation of the bear hunting ritual, reveal any contradictions

²⁰ Ray, op. cit., 151-176.

between the words and the deeds of the hunters as Smith suggests are found there; (2) the bear ritual is not intended to be a “perfect hunt” as Smith suggests, but is, rather, “a celebration to which the bear is invited before being ritually dispatched;” (3) since the bear ceremony is performed only among a few East Asiatic people, it can hardly be assumed that the rite influences the collective mind of the northern hunters; and (4) because Smith’s view of the bear ceremony treats only one aspect of the ceremony, the killing of the bear, and deals with only selected statements about bear hunting, his view is “intentionally partial and hypothetical.”²¹

In the second part of his essay, Ray uses Richard Nelson’s study of the Koyukon bear hunting ritual and bear party, in order to evaluate the validity and applicability of Smith’s theory of ritual.²² Ray points out that Smith’s theory cannot be applied to the best ethnographic data on the Koyukon hunting ritual. Finally, Ray asserts that Smith’s theory is based on an outsider’s perspective, which he confuses with the hunter’s view of the world:

²¹ Ibid., 153.

²² In his treatment of the Koyukon bear hunting ritual, Ray does not pay any attention to any changes in the political, economical and religious spheres. A similar lack of attention to historical change is also evident in Joseph M. Kitagawa’s study of the Ainu bear ceremony. The Ainu appears to be very static in Kitagawa’s portrayal. “Despite uncertainties about actual Ainu identity, scholars believe that the Ainu inherited a form of religious belief and practice common to prehistoric peoples of the arctic area. Thus historians of religions can learn something from the Ainu about prehistoric arctic religion, to which we otherwise have no direct access.” Joseph M. Kitagawa, *The History of Religions: Understanding Human Experience* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987): xvi. A few archaeological challenges have been mounted against such a naive historical diffusionism. The archaeologist Utakawa Hiroshi, for example, goes so far as to argue that the archaeological evidence indicates that the *Iyomante* was created in the mid-eighteenth century. Utakawa Hiroshi, *Iyomante no kokogaku* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1989): 99-102. Watanabe Hiroshi, for his part, suggests that the probable origin of the *Iyomante* is to be found in the culture of the Okhotsk. Watanabe Hitoshi, “Ainu Bunka no Genryu, tokuni Ohotsuku Bunka tono kankei ni tsuite,” *Kokogaku Zasshi* 60, no. 1 (1974): 72-82. Recently, Sato Takao reported that archaeological evidence was found in the Otafuku Rock Cave in eastern Hokkaido in the period of the Satsumon culture (c. 8th-12th cent. C.E.): Sato Takao, “‘Kumakuri’ no keito,” *Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan Kenkyu Hokoku* 48 (1993): 107-126.

The problem lies in confusing the two, in giving priority to the outsider's view of reality, "the way things are," and in assuming that the natives must share this view so that their rituals become merely forced "ideological" statements about the way "things ought to be."²³

While Ray criticizes Smith's analysis of the bear hunting ritual, he does not extend his criticism to Smith's interpretation of the bear ceremony. Therefore, I will develop my critical analysis of Smith's interpretation of the bear ceremony.

In extending Ray's critique, I find the following problems in Smith's treatment of the bear ceremony: (1) his "brief, highly generalized description" of the bear ceremony does not cover the whole bear ceremony; (2) in constructing this generalized description, Smith selects one reported case among many and then represents it as the crucial constitutive element in his generalized description of the bear ceremony; (3) Smith's neglect of geographical and cultural differences, coupled with his proffered generalized description, implies that so-called "primitive" people are the same everywhere; and (4) Smith's generalized description is constructed in such a way that, not surprisingly, the resultant picture matches his own theory.

Smith uses the bear ceremonies of "a number of these circumpolar peoples" in order to argue his general point concerning ritual.²⁴ In a note he refers to pages 106 to 135 of Hallowell's study, in which Hallowell discusses the bear ceremonies of the Gilyak, the Gold, the Oltscha, the Orochi (a people along the Amur river), and the Ainu.²⁵ As Ray points out, these are not all circumpolar people. The Japanese anthropologist Obayashi Taryo thinks that the bear ceremony developed only among people living between the littoral zone and Hokkaido, where the ecology is characterized by a deciduous broad-leaved forest.²⁶ Facing Smith's misrepresentation of the ethnography, one begins to suspect Smith's "generalized description" of the bear ceremony to be a fabrication woven out of the earlier ethnographic descriptions.

The first part of Smith's generalized description of the bear ceremony covers the period from the capture of a bear cub in the mountains to the

²³ Ray, op. cit., 172.

²⁴ Smith, op. cit., 63.

²⁵ Ibid., 144. See Hallowell, op. cit., 106-35.

²⁶ Obayashi Taryo, "Kumamatsuri no rekishi minzokugakuteki kenkyu-gakushi teki tenbo," *Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan Kenkyu Hokoku* 10, no. 2 (1985): 446-447.

ceremonial division of its body and its consumption. Smith describes the hunting aspect of the bear ceremony in detail, yet as Ray points out, this is only one aspect of the whole bear ceremonial complex. Smith presents his generalized description of the bear ceremony by assuming that the hunt and the ritual killing are the most important elements of the ritual complex. Thus, he describes the bear ceremony in such a manner that a reader has the impression that the killing is the essential element.

The second part of Smith's generalized description of the bear ceremony seeks to demonstrate that this ceremony represents the "perfect hunt." The perfection of the hunt in the bear ceremony is found, he claims, in the ritual manner of killing the bear:

The bear was treated correctly as a guest. It was constrained to rejoice in its fate, to walk to its death rather than run away, to assume the correct posture for its slaughter, to have the proper words addressed to it (regardless of length) before it is killed, to be slain face-to-face, and to be killed in the proper all-but-bloodless manner.²⁷

Those who know little or nothing about the bear ceremony might be persuaded by Smith's argument, but a careful reading of this part of his generalized description of the bear ceremony raises a serious question concerning his representation of the ethnographic sources. The last portion of the quoted description, "to be killed in the proper all-but-bloodless manner," is intended to stress the perfection of the bear ceremony. Yet, in checking Smith's reference to Hallowell, one finds that Hallowell mentions this manner of killing the bear in a footnote, yet omits it from his own general description of the bear ceremony.²⁸ Significantly, it is omitted by Hallowell precisely because it does not constitute a general element. Hallowell mentions the single such case among the Gilyak reported by von Schrenck and another case from the Tahltan of North America. Thus, this element is exceptional rather than common, let alone, a necessary or crucial element of the bear ceremony.

There is a report concerning the blood-shedding of the Ainu bear ceremony which is directly in conflict with Smith's interpretation. Isabella L.

²⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, 64.

²⁸ Hallowell, by referring to von Schrenck, writes, "the blood which is lost is immediately covered with snow. It may be remarkable here that the Tahltan, after killing a bear 'gather the remains and the blood that is not required and cover it if possible.' " *Op. cit.*, 115. See note 484.

Bird, who traveled through the Yezo islands (present-day Hokkaido) from 1878 to 1879, reports on the Ainu bear ceremony,

Yells and shouts are used to excite the bear, and when he becomes much agitated a chief shoots him with an arrow, inflicting a slight wound which maddens him, on which the bars of the cage are raised, and he springs forth, very furious. At this stage the Ainos run upon him with various weapons, each one striving to inflict a wound, as it brings good luck to draw his blood.²⁹

Clearly, at least among the Ainu, the bear ritual is not bloodless. It seems clear that the Ainu do not perform the bear ceremony to present "the proper all-but-bloodless manner" in Smith's sense.³⁰ Therefore, one cannot rely on Smith's interpretation of the bear ceremony for its religious meanings. One has to go back to the original ethnographies.

While I accept Ray's criticism of Smith, his interpretation of the bear ceremony represented by the Gilyak and the Ainu also has serious problems. Ray writes:

The stated purpose of this rite [a periodic bear ceremony] is to convey a request for continued provision of game to the spiritual powers via the sacrificed bear 'messenger.'

In another place, he repeats almost the same thesis,

the purpose of this ceremony is to kill a bear that has been held in captivity so that it will act as a spokesman to the spirits, asking them for a continued supply of game.³¹

Ray makes at least four serious mistakes here, if reviewed based on the Ainu bear ceremony, which he includes. First, he implies the bear cub is "a captive." Second, he calls the ritual killing of the bear a "sacrifice." Third, he calls the bear "a spokesman" or "a messenger" to the spirit. Fourth, he mistakenly assumes that the spirit of the bear carries gifts given by people

²⁹ Isabella L. Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan, an Account of Travels on Horseback in the Interior including Visits to the Aborigines of Yezo and the Shrines of Nikko and Ise*, vol. 2 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1880): 100.

³⁰ Smith does not pay enough serious attention to the issue of how a historian of religions goes about generalizing with intellectual integrity from various ethnographic data, including contradictory accounts.

³¹ Ray, op. cit., 156, 159.

and shows them to the gods, and that, as a result, the spirit of the bear promises to return to the human world.

From the Ainu point of view, humans do not capture the bear cub, depriving it of its freedom or autonomy. Rather, they take care of the bear cub, as they are charged to do by the *kamuy* of the mountain. What seems crucial here is a temporary domestication of the bear which belongs to the mountain in the habitual space of the human life. When the bear cub is brought into the village, the bear is welcomed as a guest. Moreover, Ray uncritically applies the category of sacrifice to the bear ceremony. Yet, among the Ainu, the bear is not “sacrificed” in the usual sense of the word:

A truly essential element . . . is that the recipient of the gift be a supernatural being (that is, one endowed with supernatural power), with whom the giver seeks to enter into or remain in communion. . . On the other hand, it is indeed essential to the concept that the human offerer removes something from his own disposal and transfers it to a supernatural recipient.³²

³² I think that it is appropriate to cite Henninger's summarizing view of sacrifice in order to show that the notion of sacrifice cannot be applied to the Ainu *Iyomante*. Joseph Henninger, “Sacrifice,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, ed. in chief, vol. 12 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1987): 545-546. I cannot develop a whole theoretical argument concerning sacrifice here. Edward B. Tylor's theory of sacrifice as a gift of bribe cannot be used since it is the *kamuy* who carries his gift (i.e., animal flesh) into the human world in the first place. (Edward B. Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture* [New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958]: 461-478.) W. Robertson Smith's theory of sacrifice as a communal meal can be applied to the communal meal of the *Iyomante*, but it does not offer a full interpretation. (W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites, The Fundamental Institutions* [New York: Meridian Books, 1956]: 239-240.) Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss's theory of sacrifice as a connection of the sacred world and the profane world presupposes a clear distinction between the sacred and profane world. As the *kamuy yukar* shows, an animal is a form of a visiting *kamuy* in the human world, so that the sacred and profane world are fused and merged. Furthermore, a sacrificed animal is not a victim in the Ainu *Iyomante*, as they would assume. (Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964]: 97.) Adolf E. Jensen's theory of sacrifice as a reenactment and repetition of killing in primordial mythic time is useful, yet Jensen cites Kindaichi's view that the ceremonial killing of a bear has nothing in common with sacrifice. (Adolf E. Jensen, *Myth and Cult among Primitive People* [Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1963]: 141.)

This notion of sacrifice cannot be applied to the Ainu bear ceremony because the bear is not regarded as something which the human offerer removes from his own disposal and transfers to a supernatural recipient. The bear is itself the animal form the *kamuy* assumes when visiting the human world, i. e., it is the supernatural being in a temporary form. As early as 1929, Kindaichi repudiated the interpretation of the killing of the bear as a sacrifice by arguing that these observers' presumptions explained away the religious meaning of the *Iyomante*.³³ I will return to his theory later.

If anything, Ray's theory of gift exchange should be reversed. The bear flesh represents the gifts the *kamuy* carries from the *kamuy* world to humans. The *kamuy* is sent back to the *kamuy* world with the gifts given in the ritual by the humans. That is, the gift exchange of flesh is the other way around from the conventional notion of gift-exchange adopted in modern sacrificial theory. In this regard, it is clear that the bear is not a messenger to a higher god in the mountain sent from the human world to ask the *kamuy* for a renewed supply of game. The bear is the *kamuy* who is expected to return to the human world later to be hunted by a morally upright hunter precisely because it had been well treated in the human world and given a lot of gifts.

Up to this point, my own criticism has centered on the corpse of the bear following the lines of Ray's criticism of Smith. I will now shift my attention from the issue of the purported discrepancy between the ideal and the real deeds in the ritual bear hunts and the bear ceremony to the issue of determining the fundamental core of the ritual complex. First, one must ask whether the killing of the bear constitutes the fundamental core of the ritual hunts around the world and the *Iyomante*? Clearly Smith thinks it does. He bases his judgment on two implicit and unexamined assumptions: 1) an animal is an animal everywhere, to adapt Gertrude Stein, that "a bear is a bear is a bear"; and 2) a human action toward an animal means the same thing everywhere it is found. These assumptions depend upon a preconceived notion of the animal-human or the hunted-hunter relationship: the human is the agent who kills the animal, while the animal is the victim to be killed. However, these assumptions ignore the crucial issue of different cultural understandings of personhood and the ontological status of animals.

³³ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Kumamatsuri no hanashi," in *Ainu Bunkashi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1964): 95. The article was published originally in 1929.

Questions surrounding cultural notions of person or self have been raised by Marcel Mauss³⁴ and Clifford Geertz,³⁵ among others, but their scope of investigation is limited to human beings. In the study of the bear rituals, it is essential to go beyond this limit and to take seriously the issue concerning cultural notions of personhood which is shared by humans, animals, and spirits, pointedly raised by A. Irving Hallowell in his "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View."³⁶ It is absolutely necessary to take into full consideration the Ainu notions of personhood and agency in order to understand the *Iyomante*, rather than to impose uncritically the conventional modern Western categories of human, animal, plant, and world on the Ainu materials.³⁷

Recovering the Religious Contexts of the Iyomante

Many scholarly works on the history of the Ainu under Japanese colonialism are available today.³⁸ According to the authors of these studies, tremendous political, economic, social and religious changes have occurred in Ainu communities. Even if certain structures and forms of the *Iyomante* have survived largely intact, it is still necessary to consider the religious dimensions of the Ainu religious world that have been lost in order to locate the religious meanings of the *Iyomante* in the contexts of the Ainu religious world. For instance, shamanistic practices disappeared from public view and

³⁴ Marcel Mauss, "A category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self," in *The Category of the Person. Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed. Michael Carrithers et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 1-25.

³⁵ Clifford Geertz, "Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973): 360-411.

³⁶ A. Irving Hallowell, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View," in *Culture in History. Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York: Octagon Books, 1981): 19-52.

³⁷ Kitagawa considers the notion of personhood in his study and develops the notion of correspondence between the human world and the *kamuy* world. However, he does not pursue the full significance of this.

³⁸ To mention a few: Kayano Shigeru, *Ainu no sato, Nibutani ni ikeru* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Shinbunsha, 1977); Kikuchi Isao, *Bakuhā taisei to Ezochi* (Tokyo: Yuzankaku, 1984); Okuyama Ryo, *Ainu suiboshi* (Sapporo: Miyama Shobo, 1966); Shinya Ryo, *Ainu minzoku teikoshi* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1972); and Utakawa Hiroshi, *Iomante no kokogaku* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan Kai, 1989).

went underground, especially after the Meiji era, as Buddhism and Shinto were introduced into the lives of the Ainu. Along with them, Christianity also was introduced.³⁹ In addition to the disappearance of shamanistic practices, four important aspects of the traditional Ainu religious life changed dramatically in the wake of cultural contact with the Japanese: 1) the traditional house or *chise* disappeared; 2) the practice of tattooing the face and arms of young women was abandoned; 3) practices of burning the deceased's house and of avoiding the tomb ceased; and 4) the *lyomante* was no longer performed in some areas.

According to Kindaichi, in the pre-contact period, most women functioned as a shamaness (*tusu*) when people sought a reason for uncommon happenings.⁴⁰ He suggested that *kamuy yukar*, mythic narratives about the experience of the *kamuy* in the human world, originated in shamanistic possession, because they were usually narrated in the first person singular. *Kamuy yukar* are characterized by a special refrain which might imitate the voices or sounds of animals who were believed to be the visible figures of *kamuy* in the human world.⁴¹ *Oina yukar* (legends of cultural heroes, *Ainu okkuru*) and *ainu yukar* (legends of the adventures of human heroes) evolved from *Kamuy yukar*.⁴² Chiri adds that *Kamuy yukar* also came from the oracles of *kamuy* received in dreams, from magical spells, and from ritual masked dancing at certain ceremonies.⁴³ Chiri, the Ainu linguist, hypothesized that shamans performed a masked dance du-

³⁹ John Batchelor, a missionary and scholar, went to an Ainu *kotan* (village) and converted several people to Christianity. Ainu informants such as Chiri Sachie, who recited many *yukar* for Kindaichi, were converted Christians. No scholarly attention has been paid to the fact that these Ainu women who recited *ainu yukar* for Japanese scholars were converted Christians. Nor has the significance of the fact that the Japanese scholars were men while the Ainu informants were women been considered.

⁴⁰ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Ezo no utaimono ni mieru fujo," *Ainu Bunkashi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1964): 245.

⁴¹ Chiri Mashiho, "Ainu no Shinyo (1)," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1973): 165-69.

⁴² Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Genshi Bungaku to shitenoyukara-Ainu no minzokuteki jojishi," *Ainu Bunkashi*: 290. He repeats this point in many places of his writings.

⁴³ Chiri Mashiho, "Majinaishi to kawauso," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1973): 210.

ring the *Iyomante* in prehistoric times, but there is no firm evidence for this.⁴⁴

Shamanism also seems to have been associated with the vertical cosmology of the Ainu. Sueoka Somio, in his study of Ainu astrology, classified *kamuy* in terms of their function on the vertical and horizontal axis.⁴⁵ At the intersection of the vertical and horizontal axis, there was *ape-kamuy* (*kamuy* of fire). On the horizontal plane, one found *kamuy* to whom the *inau* were dedicated. These included *pase-kamuy* (another name for the *kamuy* of fire), *nusa-koro-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who owns *nusa*), the deity who controls crops, *sir-ampa-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who owns earth), the deity who rules four-legged animals and plants on earth, and *has-inau-kor-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who owns branches and *inau*), and the deity who rules winged creatures and is the *kamuy* for hunting. *Kim-un-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the mountain or the bear) is subject to *sir-ampa-kamuy* while *kotan-kor-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who owns the village or the owl) is subject to *has-inau-kor-kamuy*. *Kim-un-kamuy* and *kotan-koro-kamuy* are two deities for whom the *Iyomante* was performed. On the vertical axis *kamuy* were known through shamanistic forms of communion. They included *oina-kami* (the *kamuy* who practice shamanism), *okikurumi* (one wearing glittering skin clothes), the culture hero, and *samayekur* (the *kamuy* who brings oracles). These *kamuy* belong to the category of *mosir-kar-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who created the world).⁴⁶

The importance of the house as a religious space can be seen from the fact that in 1984, when an Ainu man named Kawamura tried to restore the *Iyomante* and to record it on film in 1984, he started his preparations

⁴⁴ Chiri Mashiho, "Yukara no hitobito to sono seikatsu, Hokkaido no senshi jidaijin no seikatsu ni kansuru bunkashiteki kousatsu," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1973): 10-11.

⁴⁵ Sueoka Sumio, *Ainu no hoshi* (Asahikawa: Asahikawa Shinko Kosha, 1979): 52-54.

⁴⁶ On the vertical dimension, there are three dimensions: *nis* (heaven), *ainu-mosir* (human world), and *polna-mosir* (underworld). There are six layers in *nis*: *rikunkantomosir* (heavenly land located at high place) where *kanto-kor-kamui* (high god) rules, *nociw-kanto* (celestial heaven), *sinisi-kanto* (true sky heaven), *nisi-kanto* (heaven of cloud), *ranke-kanto* (under-heaven), and *urar-kanto* (heaven of haze or mist). *Ibid.*, 44-46.

by building the traditional house,⁴⁷ even though today most Ainu people live in Western-style houses. Yet, as Kitagawa notes, "the original hut had descended from the *kamuy mosir* with the *kamuy* of fire, and no matter how humble the hut was, it was regarded as *kamuy kat tumbu* (the room which the *kamuy* built)."⁴⁸ Ideally, the village, which consisted of a group of the houses, was built with its back toward the mountains. The east window was the most sacred space after the hearth. The *inau* (whittled wooden wands), bear, deer, or gifts for *kamuy* were carried out and in through the east window.⁴⁹

As Ohnuki-Tierney has pointed out, the Ainu people employed bodily metaphors for symbolizing spatial orientation.⁵⁰ The house and landscape were conceived as something bodily. Chiri wrote that the roof was called *chise-sapa* (the head of the house), the walls were called *chise-tumam* (the body of the house), the interior of the house was called *chise-upsor* (the bosom of the house), the triangular hole in the pole of the roof was called *etu-pok* (under the nose), the cover over the window on the east side was called *puyar-sikrap* (the eyelashes of the window), and the *inau* placed in the hole above *puyar-sikrap* was called *chise-noyporo* (the brain of the house).⁵¹ Outside, the river and mountain were regarded as living and were also named according to the parts of the human body. The source of a river was called *pet-kitay* (the head), the middle *pet-rantom* (the breast), the bend of a river *sittok* (an elbow) and the mouth of the river *o* (the genitals).⁵² Moreover, the summit of a mountain was called *nupuri-kitay* (the head), the mountainside *nupuri-kotor* (the chest), the foot of the mountain *nupuri-ohonkes* (the abdomen) or *nupuri-onto* (the rump).⁵³ Thus, the Ainu percep-

⁴⁷ Iyomante Jikko Iinkai, ed., *Iyomante: Kawakami chiho no kumaokuri no kiroku*, (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1985): 12-13.

⁴⁸ Kitagawa, op. cit., 86.

⁴⁹ John Batchelor, *The Ainu and Their Folk-Lore* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1901): 123-124.

⁵⁰ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "Spatial Concepts of the Ainu of the Northwest Coast of Southern Sakhalin," *American Anthropologist* 74 (1972): 426-457.

⁵¹ Chiri Mashiho, "Ainu jukyo ni kansuru jakkan no kousatsu," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1974): 228.

⁵² Chiri Mashiho, "Ainugo Nyumon," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1974): 256.

⁵³ Ibid., 260.

tion of space was close to what Maurice Leenhardt called a cosmomorphic view.⁵⁴

As to the constitutive relationship between the house and the ritual space of the *Iyomante*, the Ainu experience of the interior of the house is important. “Treasure” was placed in the ritual space in the east-north corner of the house. The people always sat in the house with their backs toward the treasure. The space between the human and the treasure is called *seremak* which, in a religious sense, meant a guardian spirit.⁵⁵ The treasure represented the material presence of the guardian spirits. The Ainu’s experience of the human body helped to form the sense of front and back in the house, which was closely related to vision. Visibility/ invisibility, visual illusion, and visual transformation were important mythic motifs in the Ainu *kamuy-yukar*.

Tattooing on the face and arms was practiced only by young women as a sign of adolescence.⁵⁶ In addition, a kind of chastity belt (*upsor-un-kut*) was given to adolescent young women. Most often an elder woman tattooed the young woman.

After the introduction of Buddhism into Ainu life, the funeral rites conducted by Buddhist priests were widely adopted. By 1956 in the village of Niputani, there were only three elderly people who knew how to perform the funeral in the traditional Ainu manner.⁵⁷ As the funeral practices were changed, attitudes toward the dead also changed. Traditional Ainu were said to have feared the ghost of a dead person and, as a result, the living never

⁵⁴ In his study of Melanesian religious mode, Leenhardt wrote, “[A Melanesian] does not have an anthropomorphic view, but on the contrary submits himself to the effects of an undifferentiated view that causes him to include the whole world in each of his representations, without dreaming of distinguishing himself from that world: we might call it a cosmomorphic view.” Maurice Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979): 20.

⁵⁵ Chiri Mashiho, *Bunrui Ainugo Jiten, Ningen-hen*, *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, Suppl. 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1975): 627. Yamamoto Yuko, *Karafuto Ainu, Jukyo to Mingu* (Tokyo: Sagami Shobo, 1970): 52-53.

⁵⁶ Segawa Kiyoko, *Ainu no Kon'in* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1972): 11-16.

⁵⁷ Kayano Shigeru, op. cit., 64.

returned to the cemetery to visit gravesites. However, a recent book contains a picture of an Ainu woman standing by a gravepost in a cemetery.⁵⁸

The *Iyomante* itself ceased to be performed regularly a long time ago. Kashiwagi Bentoji, who was eighty-two or eighty-three years old in 1961, said that she saw the *Iyomante* for the last time when she was sixteen or seventeen years old in 1895 or 1896.⁵⁹ Inukai and Natori wrote that they had observed the *Iyomante* performed in Nijibetsu village in 1949 where it had not been performed in the preceding thirteen years.⁶⁰ Kawamura's *Iyomante* in 1985 was the first performance in twenty-eight years.⁶¹

Mythic Narratives and Symbols of the Ritual Dismembering of the Bear's Body and the Decorating of the Bear's Skull

The bear hunting ritual in the mountains and the *Iyomante* had a cyclical relationship. For example, when a bear cub was caught after its mother bear was killed, the humans were charged to take it down to their village and to take care of it. At the edge of the village, a welcoming ceremony for the bear mother and cub was held. The dead bear and the alive cub were taken into the house through the east window. Thereafter the cub was domesticated and well taken care of by the people.⁶² In a sense, the *Iyomante* is a ritual which reverses this directionality. It is a ritual to send the *kamuy* back to the *kamuy* world from the human world. In this religious context, the deep religious meaning of the *Iyomante* is found in the *um-memke* (decorating the skull), the ritual dismembering of the bear and the decorating of its skull. Inukai and Natori note that the Ainu could not perform the *um-memke* rite in a short and abbreviated manner even on the mountain.⁶³ Before I interpret the religious significance of these ritual acts, several additional remarks concerning the Ainu religious world are necessary. These concern the ritual manner of sending off spirits from the phenomenal world to the *kamuy*

⁵⁸ The picture shows the woman moving around the tomb of Dr. Munro. See Sugano Kosuke, *Gendai no Ainu-Minzoku Ido no Roman* (Tokyo: Genbunsha, 1966): i.

⁵⁹ Hayakawa Noboru, *Ainu no minzoku* (Tokyo: Iwasaki Bijutsusha, 1970): 20.

⁶⁰ Inukai and Natori, op. cit., 135.

⁶¹ *Iyomante Jikko Iinkai*, op. cit., 2.

⁶² See Smith, op. cit., 58-60, and Kitagawa, op. cit., 82-97.

⁶³ Inukai Tetsuo and Natori Takemitsu, "Iomante (Ainu no kumamatsuri) no bunkateki igi to sono keishiiki (1)," *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* 2 (1939): 241.

world, the relationship of astronomical designs in the *Iyomante* complex, and the sexual symbolic configuration.

What is at stake in these fundamental Ainu categories is the relationship between the visible material forms of things and creatures and their invisible spiritual forms. In order to examine this issue, it is absolutely necessary to recall that human beings are called “*ainu*” in this world and that the *kamuy* assume human (*ainu*) form in the *kamuy* world, while they take on animal forms when visiting the human world.⁶⁴

If we focus on the Ainu understanding of the ontological status of the bear in the *Iyomante*, (i.e., if we extend the notion of personhood to this “animal”), then we will come to recognize the central importance of the ritual transformation of the bear that the ritual is designed to effect. In most studies of ritual, the focus has been laid upon the kinds of transformation undergone by the human participants,⁶⁵ but in the Ainu *Iyomante*, the ritual transformation occurs to the “bear.”

In order to make this point clear, it is necessary to introduce a linguistic explanation of the Ainu hunting. The Ainu perceive animals, including bear, deer, salmon, and whales, to be the form of the *kamuy* visiting the human world (*ainu-mosir*). The hunting of these animals, thus, requires the Ainu people to host and entertain such a visitor and, then, to send him back to the *kamuy* realm. The Ainu used the terms *maratone* and *shumau-an* to describe the capture of animals. *Maratone* means “a *kamuy* becomes a guest” and *shumau-an* means there was *shumau* or, according to Kindaichi, “*kamuy*,

⁶⁴ To borrow a term from Daniel Merkur, *ramat* can be translated as the “in-dwellers.” Merkur discusses the soul dualism, involving free soul and breath soul among the Inuit. He goes on to say that there are “persons” of places and objects as well as “persons” of animals and other nonhuman creatures. The “persons” of animals are envisaged as having human form, whereas the free souls take the form of their respective species. See Daniel Merkur, *Powers Which We Do Not Know: The Gods and Spirits of the Inuit* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1991).

⁶⁵ In two representative studies of ritual by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, their focus upon human participants are clear. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960). Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969). Catherine Bell’s recent theoretical work on ritual is also focused upon human participants. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

being helped by human activity, to restore his/her own spiritual body," "returning to the state of being *kamuy*," or "becoming *kamuy* [again]."⁶⁶ The same event, seen from the perspective of *kamuy*, is referred to as *shumau-ne*, or "*kamuy* becoming *shumau*" (i.e., assuming the role of a guest or visitor).

I will now turn to the issue of the relationship between ritual action and mythic narrative in the *Iyomante*. There are several *kamuy yukar* (first-person mythic narratives told by *kamuy*) collected by Kindaichi and Kubodera which narrate the experience of *kamuy* in the form of a bear in the human world.⁶⁷ There is an *oina yukar* which relates how an Ainu culture hero first learned the *Iyomante* from *kamuy* among their collections.

The *kamuy yukar* recounts in the first person the bear's experience of being dismembered and being restored to his own spiritual body. When the *kamuy* is shot by poisonous arrows, he becomes sleepy and loses consciousness. When he regains consciousness, he finds that his physical body has been dismembered and is hanging over a tree. Then he observes that the people have decorated his skull with *inau* and other gifts.⁶⁸ In the *Iyomante*, the spirit of the *kamuy* is said to sit on the bear's head between the two ears. The *kamuy*'s experience of being dismembered cannot be narrated in the *kamuy yukar*, because the bear was unconscious at that time.

According to the *oina yukar*, the human ritualist dismembers the bear's body just as the culture hero *Ainu-rak-kur* had first learned to do from the *Kim-um-kamuy*. However, the *kamuy yukar* and the *oina yukar* are regarded by the Ainu as being two different types of mythic narratives. Therefore, in order to interpret the relationship between the ritual action of the *Iyomante* and these mythic narratives, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the *kamuy*'s experience of being ritually dismembered in the *Iyomante* as this is narrated in the *kamuy yukar* and the relationship between the ritual actions in the *Iyomante* and those of the culture hero.

⁶⁶ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Kumamatsuri no hanashi," *Ainu Bunkashi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1961): 93.

⁶⁷ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Ainu no kami to kuma no setsuwa," and "Kumamatsuri no hanashi," *Ainu Bunkashi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1951): 75-99. Kubodera Itsuhiko, *Ainu Jojishi, Shinyo-Seiden no kenkyu* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1977) See especially no. 6 to 15: 61-119.

⁶⁸ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Ainu no kami to kuma no setsuwa," 83. Inukai and Natori, "Iyomante (Ainu no kumamatsuri) no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (1)," *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* 2 (1939): 249.

There are three types of ritual manner perceived among the Ainu in terms of sending off the *kamuy* out of the phenomenal and material world to the *kamuy* world: *Iyomante*, *opunire* and *iwakte*. There are regional variations of usage and meaning of these terms. Generally, though, *Iyomante* is used for ritually sending off the *kamuy* of the most important animals, such as the bear and the owl. *Opunire* is used for the same purpose, but it takes place on a mountain. *Iwakte* is used for tools, cups, wooden boxes, and manufactured items and less important animals.⁶⁹ Behind these notions several related elements of religious orientation may be perceived. As Kitagawa points out, the human world and the *kamuy* world are corresponding.⁷⁰ In the *kamuy* world, the *kamuy* look like humans and live like humans. When the *kamuy* visit the human world, however, they wear temporary clothing called *hayokupe*, (i.e., an animal body). Other *kamuy* of minor rank become plants, human tools, and other objects in this world. What is important to note here is the religious notion that the *kamuy* become embodied in some material or other in the human world.

The Ainu notion of personhood plays a role in the formulation of an interesting point of correspondence between the *Iyomante*, astronomical signs, and shamanism. According to Munro, "There is some evidence that stars were associated with *kamui*; at the great festival when a bear is killed ritually the name of a star or star group connected with the Bear constellation is given to the spirit of the slain bear — Chinukara-guru (Visible Person)."⁷¹ The constellation connected with the *Iyomante* is *maratttonokanociw*, which corresponds to the Western Harp constellation. Significantly, however, the Ainu view this constellation as having the shape of a bear's head.⁷² The V-form of the Western harp is seen as the bear skull (*marrato*) on the forked tree branch. The bear skull is placed on the lowest branch, called *yuk-sapa-oma-ni* (a tree holding the head of a bear) or *pakkay-ni* (the tree carrying a child). The star Vega corresponds to the bear skull. Despite the regional diversity in the precise manner in which the skull is decorated at the ritual, these three stars are uniformly referred to as *marratonokanociw* among all Ainu in Hokkaido. In the eastern part of Hokkaido, the two bright

⁶⁹ Chiri Mashiko, *Bunrui Ainugo Jiten, Ningen hen, Collected Works of Chiri Mashiko*, Suppl. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1975): 565.

⁷⁰ Kitagawa, op. cit., 74.

⁷¹ Munro, op. cit., 14.

⁷² Sueoka, op. cit., 187-188.

stars at the top of Gemini are called *asrupenoka-nociw* (stars of the bear's ears).⁷³ Other constellations are also apparently related to the *kamuy*, but unfortunately, these relationships are unclear at this time and require further study.

The last point to be made about the symbolic complex informing the *Iyomante* has to do with sexual symbolism. All reference to sex is forbidden during the *Iyomante*. Moreover, sexual intercourse during the four day period of the *Iyomante* is also forbidden. If any one violated this rule the night before the *Iyomante*, the suspected person had to be found and an apology made to the *kamuy*.⁷⁴ In addition, those who drank the blood of the bear in the *Iyomante* were forbidden to have sexual intercourse until the next new moon.⁷⁵ Celibacy was also observed by hunters before they went on a hunt.

During the ritual dismemberment of the bear, careful attention was paid to the removal of the sexual organs. After the genitals were cut off the body, they were placed under the head with skins. Sexual organs were regarded as powerful. For instance, in order to expel a malignant power, both men and women would expose their sexual organs to the evil power while reciting a magical incantation.⁷⁶ It is also reported that when a woman came across a bad tempered bear, she pulled up her dress and exposed her genitals, waved her dress, and said, "You came out to see what you want to see. So, look at it long and carefully."⁷⁷ It was believed that the bear would leave without harming her. The power of genitals to expel evil forces recalls *Ainu-rak-kur*, an Ainu cultural hero, who expelled evil spirits from the human realm.

There are five detailed ethnographic descriptions of the ritual dismembering of the bear's body. Inukai (1935),⁷⁸ Inukai and Natori (1939),⁷⁹ Ifukube

⁷³ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁴ Chiri, op. cit., 162.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 250.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 67.

⁷⁸ Inukai Tetsuo, "Ainu no okonau kuma no kaibou," *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 1, no. 3 (1935): 74-83.

⁷⁹ Inukai Tetsuo and Natori Takemitsu, "Iyomante (Ainu no kumamatsuri) no bunkateki igi to so no keishiki (1)," 237-271, and "Iyomante (Ainu no kumamatsuri) no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (2)," *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* 3 (1940): 79-135.

Muneo (1964-65),⁸⁰ Sato Naotaro (1955-57),⁸¹ and Fujimura Hisakazu (1988-89).⁸² I will not go into any detail concerning the step-by-step ritual dismemberment of the bear. A few points of importance that emerge from these ethnographies deserve our attention.

According to Sato, in the Kushiro area, the term *kamuy-kara-kato* ("creating the *kamuy*'s figure") is used to designate the ritual process of the *um-memke*.⁸³ The skull decorated with *inau* and three leaves of bamboo grass is called *riwak kamuy*, meaning the "returning *kamuy*."⁸⁴ It is stuck on top of the Y-shaped tree planted in the ground. This is the last stage of the ritual transformation of the *kamuy*. The core of the *Iyomante* is the ritual transformation of the *kamuy*'s material body into its invisible spiritual body. The Ainu believe that they help to release the *kamuy* from its animal body and send it back up to the *kamuy* world.

The Ainu call the ritual dismemberment of the bear *hepere ari*, "unloading" or "unburdening the luggage." By ritually dismembering the bear's body, the Ainu help unload the gifts which the *kamuy* has brought from the *kamuy* world to the human world. While the Ainu accept gifts from the *kamuy*, in return they offer gifts such as a short sword, a decorated sword, decorated arrows, and dried fish to the *kamuy* to carry back to the *kamuy* world. Gift exchange here is not a one-way affair. In light of this, Ray's

⁸⁰ Ifukube Muneo, "Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (sono ichi)," *Gakuen Ronshu* 8 (1964): 1-32. "Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (sono ni)," *Gakuen Ronshu* 9 (1965): 29-56.

⁸¹ Sato Naotaro, "Kushiro Ainu no Iyomande (kumaokuri)," parts 1-23. *Dokusho-jin*: 4 no. 2 (1955): 10-12; no. 3 (1955): 23-24; no. 4 (1955): 39-40; no. 5 (1955): 51-52; no. 6 (1955): 63-64; no. 7 (1955): 87-88; no. 8 (1955): 99-100; no. 9 (1956): 111-112; no. 10 (1956): 123-124; 5, no. 1 (1956): 135-136; no. 2 (1956): 11-12; no. 3 (1956): 9-10; no. 4 (1956): 13-14; no. 5 (1956): 7-8; no. 6 (1956): 15-16; no. 7 (1956): 9-10; no. 8 (1956): 13-14; no. 9 (1956): 7-8; no. 10 (1957): 11-12; no. 11 (1957): 15-16; 6, no. 1 (1957): 11-12; no. 2 (1957): 15-16; no. 3 (1957): 11-12.

⁸² Fujimura Hisakazu, "Ainu no reiokuri," parts 1-18. *Gakuto* 88, no. 1 (1991): 42-49; no. 2 (1991): 40-47; no. 3 (1991): 44-49; no. 4 (1991): 38-43; no. 5 (1991): 36-41; no. 6 (1991): 36-41; no. 7 (1991): 36-41; no. 8 (1991): 42-47; no. 9 (1991): 42-47; no. 10 (1991): 36-41; no. 11 (1991): 42-47; no. 12 (1991): 46-51; 89, no. 1 (1992): 44-49; no. 2 (1992): 38-43; no. 3 (1992): 34-39; no. 4 (1992): 34-39; no. 5 (1992): 34-39; no. 6 (1992): 36-41.

⁸³ Fujimura, op. cit., 103.

⁸⁴ Kindaichi, op. cit., 94.

interpretation of the bear ceremony as a sacrifice and gift offering from man to the *kamuy* is misleading and one-sided.

Following this gift exchange, a feast is held. The gifts which the *kamuy* has brought from the *kamuy* world (the various products of the bear's body) are shared by the people. All such gifts from the *kamuy* have to be eaten during the *Iyomante*. This ritual consumption of the bear flesh constitutes a communion between the human body and the *kamuy*. After the *kamuy*'s animal form has been ritually dismembered, decorated with the *inau* and other gifts, the *kamuy* is believed to take invisible human form, and is expected to walk into the mountains, carrying these gifts on his back just as the humans do.

For modern man, killing an animal is viewed primarily as an act of violence. Yet, if one carries this understanding into the *Iyomante*, as Jonathan Z. Smith does, one misses the very core of the ritual. Only by shifting one's focus to the ritual dismemberment-as-ritual transformation and gift-exchange, can one recover the religious significance of the *Iyomante*.

Retrospect

Beginning with Hallowell's study, there have been numerous studies of the bear hunt ritual killing, which have assumed the bear ritual to be simply a sub-species of the larger category of hunting rituals. As I have demonstrated, however, it is dangerous to assume, as Smith and Ray do, that a bear is always a bear and is the same everywhere and at all time. In addition, a review of the relevant ethnographic data has revealed that what the Ainu do in the *Iyomante* ritual and what the Koyukon do in their ritual dismemberment of the bear are not the same *religious* acts. A number of significant differences immediately suggest themselves: 1) In the Koyukon ritual, unlike the Ainu, there is no idea of sending the spirit off to the world of the deities; 2) among the Koyukon, there is no idea that the spirit visits the human world in animal form; 3) the Koyukon have no belief that the ritual transforms the bear into an invisible spiritual form; 4) there is no idea of reciprocal exchange of gifts between humans and the spirit; 5) the Koyukon hunter "slit [the bear's] eyes so that its spirit will not see if he should violate a taboo. And he may take off its feet to keep its spirit from moving around." This suggests that the Koyukon

hunter feared the spirit of the hunted bear,⁸⁵ something the Ainu do not do.

In conclusion, one cannot help but ask what Smith and Ray were comparing when they compared bear rituals. The Ainu and Koyukon bear rituals belong to two different religious worlds of meaning, worlds that are so different that they cannot be conflated without doing damage to the very religious meaning one seeks to understand. A historian of religions cannot compare religious phenomena without first understanding them in their own rights. Only when this has been done, can fruitful comparisons be drawn.

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⁸⁵ Nelson, *op. cit.*, 180.

BOOK REVIEWS

JAN ASSMANN, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* — Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1997 (X, 276 p.) ISBN 0-674-58738-3 (cloth) £19.95.

Monotheism is not a quasi natural fact of religious history, but a relatively late phenomenon whose origins and history can be studied in written sources. Assmann establishes a typology of two monotheisms: a cosmotheistic and a spiritual type. The cosmotheistic type, represented by the Amarna heresy of ancient Egypt, takes the monotheistic deity to be part of the cosmos, and it is by natural insight that humans understand this deity. The spiritual variety, by contrast, takes the deity to be transcendent and therefore distinct from the cosmos; as is clear from its ancient Jewish form, it is inaccessible to human reasoning and must be revealed. According to ancient sources both forms of monotheism understand themselves as distinct from the very same traditional world view — that of polytheistic Egypt. Assmann asks how the ancient Egyptian and the Judeo-Christian traditions have dealt with monotheism, and he argues that both, albeit in different ways, have sought to abolish the distinction between monotheism and polytheism. The ancient Egyptians immediately rejected Amarna monotheism as a heresy without, however, simply returning to the old-fashioned polytheistic creed. Instead, they came to develop a theology which can be characterized as a pantheistic “summodeism” in which the high god Amun animates and organizes the world through mediating powers while staying in the background as the hidden principle of unity. While this insight into Egyptian religion dates from twentieth-century Egyptological scholarship, its basic premise had been seen by Ralph Cudworth in the eighteenth century. The Western, Bible-related type of monotheism was not immediately rejected by the environment in which it originated. Over time, however, attempts were made to soften and indeed to abolish the Mosaic distinction between crude polytheistic idolatry and the true spiritual belief in the one and only deity. Assmann’s interest focusses on how in modern times philosophers, theologians, and adepts of esotericism dealt with the issue. He demonstrates that revealed monotheism

was not modified in the same way as Egyptian monotheism; instead, it was replaced by cosmotheism. In more or less subtle ways, Deists, Spinozists, and Masonics all argued that Mosaic monotheism was nothing else than Egyptian pantheism or rather the secret, mystery side of Egyptian religion. Moses, they contended, was an Egyptian.

Assmann is to be recommended for his diligent research and his wide-ranging interests. Splendidly written and cogently argued, *Moses the Egyptian* deserves a wide readership.

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BERNHARD LANG

GAVIN FLOOD, *An Introduction to Hinduism* — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996 (xviii, 341 p., 20 pl., 2 maps, 8 fig.) ISBN 0-521-43878-0 (pbk.) £12.95.

Teachers of Hinduism often feel embarrassed when asked by students of the Science of Religions to recommend a reasonable introduction into Hinduism. Most such books are too long, extensive, short or shallow. John Brockington's *The Sacred Thread* (1st. ed. Edinburgh 1981) had been an exception fulfilling Indological standards although it is small and short (222 pp.) and leaves out the systematic questions so important for Religious Studies.

Dr Flood, however, a Lecturer in Religious Studies with a fair Indological background, provides both a thematic and historical introduction. His book is a much-needed presentation of historical and modern, textual and contextual material as well as an attempt to answer the question what it all means. I can only admit to Patrick Olivelle's statement on the back cover: "It is comprehensive, clear and makes most recent scholarship accessible to an undergraduate."

Flood begins with discussing the definitional problems of Hinduism and traces the development of Hinduism from ancient origins; he thereby includes the most recent literature on the so-called Indo-aryan immigration (Erdosy, Witzel etc.), before he describes the socio-religious aspects of the Dharmaśāstras and Grhyasūtras focussing on purity, kingship and renunciation. Further chapters deal with various Hindu traditions centering upon the

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major deities Viṣṇu, Śiva and the Goddess. Special emphasis is given to the so-called tantric traditions (the author admits that in this field he relied on the expertise of Alexis Sanderson, Oxford). The following chapter on ritual, in my opinion the weakest, is a short mixture of summaries on the *rites de passage*, Pūjā, festivals, pilgrimage and sacrifice. Ch. 10 is on Hindu theology and philosophy while the concluding chapter discusses "Hinduism and the modern world", i.e. Neohinduism and the most recent nationalistic movements.

Flood's *Introduction to Hinduism* has a clear design and lay-out, includes several valuable tables and short summaries at the end of each chapter. Regretful, however, is the poor quality of the plates both due to the reproduction by the publisher and the author's selection. I noticed some careless mistakes or misspellings of Sanskrit terms: for *tīrtha* (p. 15 and 212) read *tīrtha*, for *śrauta* (p. 41) read *śrauta*, for *yupa*, *āhavaniya* and *udgatr* (all p. 42) read *yūpa*, *āhavaniya* resp. *udgātr*, for *Ramacaritmānasa* (146) read *Rāma-*°, for *arati* (p. 205) read *ārati* or *ārtī*, for *Āśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra* (p. 204) read *Āśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra*, for *Vaśiṣṭha* (index) read *Vasiṣṭha*, for Viṣṇu (back cover) Viṣṇu. The table of contents could have been in more detail. The bibliography is fairly up-to-date, it lists indological as well as anthropological titles. However, full bibliographical data are superfluously also given in the footnotes. The index is detailed and useful ("Caṇḍāla" is not in correct alphabetical order).

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OPPOSITES ATTRACT: THE BODY AND COGNITION IN A DEBATE OVER BAPTISM

THEODORE M. VIAL

Summary

Analysis of a change in a historical rite of passage, the baptism ceremony in Zurich in the 1860s, shows the relative strengths and weaknesses of recent developments in the field of ritual studies. Those who argue that ritualized action is an embodied negotiation of power relations are helpful in understanding why various groups in society fought either for or against the ritual change. But the weak structural component of these theories and an inadequate model of human action make them unable to account for speech acts in ritual, or for the change in the Zurich ritual. Cognitive theories of ritual are far more successful in explaining the force of specific structural changes. Far from being incompatible, these different approaches to ritual, if based on an adequate model of human agency, are complementary and necessary for an adequate account of the historical ritual change examined.

I. Introduction

A recent trajectory in ritual studies focuses on the body as the central category of analysis. Lawrence Sullivan, for example, writes that “the body is constructed, dismembered, or repaired in ritual.” According to Theodore Jennings, “ritual knowledge is gained by and through the body.” For Pierre Bourdieu, “[M]ythically or ritually defined objects... almost all prove to be based on movements or postures of the human body, such as going up and coming down....” Catherine Bell agrees that “the implicit and dynamic ‘end’ of ritualization... can be said to be the production of a ‘ritualized body.’”¹

¹ Lawrence E. Sullivan, “Body Works: Knowledge of the Body in the Study of Religion,” *History of Religions* 30 (August, 1990), 87. Theodore Jennings, “On Ritual Knowledge,” *The Journal of Religion* 62 (April 1982), 115. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University

This focus on the body tends towards a view that the analysis of ritual is largely the analysis of social power relations. Thus Sullivan writes, commenting on the work of López Austin, that focus on the body “can bring to light the coherence and power of ideological systems associated with the body.” For Jennings ritual is “bodily action which alters the world or the place of the ritual participant in the world.” For Bourdieu, mastery of ritual can “transform [] ritualized exchange into a confrontation of strategies.” A “skilled strategist” can turn ritualized exchanges “into an instrument of power.” Bell, who to date offers the most fully worked out analysis of ritual using the categories of body and power, claims that, “[r]itualization always aligns one within a series of relationships linked to the ultimate sources of power” (sic). “[R]itualization is a strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations.”²

Another development in ritual studies seems, at first glance, to stand in opposition to this focus on the body. Frits Staal, Dan Sperber, Pascal Boyer, E. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley, among others, focus on the cognitive aspect of ritual.³ They would not be inclined to agree with Jennings’s assertion that ritual is “primarily corporeal rather than cerebral.”⁴ While perhaps none of the theorists mentioned above would see their theories as mutually exclusive, we are left facing the question of whether ritual is fundamentally a matter of the body or of the mind, whether it is best analyzed through the concept of power or as a cognitive activity whose

Press, 1977), 118-19. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 98.

² Sullivan, 94; Jennings, 115; Bourdieu, 15; Bell, 141 and 170.

³ See Staal, *Rules Without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras, and the Human Sciences* (Toronto: Peter Lang, 1989); Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*, trans. Alice L. Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Boyer, *Tradition as Truth and Communication: A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴ Jennings, 115.

structure looks something like the deep grammar of human language.

To see these two developments as opposing one another, however, results from a misclassification. As a way of sorting out apparently competing claims I offer in this article a taxonomy of the study of ritual. I then argue, in the context of a case study of a specific debate over baptism, that the concept of directed action can move us forward using the advances both developments have made.

II. A Taxonomy of Ritual Studies

I begin with the assumption that, whatever else one may want to say about ritual, it is a system of sounds, objects, and physical movements that are endowed by human cultures with significance. In other words, ritual is a symbolic-cultural system. As such, it bears a resemblance to language, and as in the analysis of language we would expect to find in analyzing ritual (1) historical studies; (2) structural studies;⁵ and (3) something analogous to socio-linguistics — what Bourdieu would call a “dialectical” approach that focuses on the strategies and power relations of ritual acts.

If we map current work in ritual studies onto this taxonomy, it is clear that, while any given analysis of ritual may include all three categories (and I would assert that good theories should include all three), the cognitivists mentioned above are primarily concerned to advance our understanding of the structure of ritual, whereas theorists focusing on ritual as embodied power negotiations are primarily concerned with what I have rather unmelodiously called socio-ritual studies. Before getting too immersed in theory it would be best to turn to a historical ritual that will be particularly illuminating in showing the strengths and weaknesses of various types of ritual theory.

⁵ Structuralism is one model of what I call the structural component of ritual, but other models are possible. Later in this paper I will try to show some of the advantages of a cognitive model in analyzing the structure of ritual.

III. Level 1 (Historical Account): Ritual Change in Nineteenth Century Zurich

I take as an example a debate over how to baptize infants that occurred in Zurich in the nineteenth century. Preparations for this ceremony began with the birth of the child.⁶ The father of the child fetched the midwife, who was an employee of the state paid out of church funds. Along with the birthing stool the midwife brought with her a baptism dress for the infant. The father, dressed in his “Sunday best,” went to the manse to announce, in a set and memorized formula, the upcoming baptism to the minister. The father then went door to door inviting friends and relatives to the celebratory meal to be held at home following the baptism.

The baptism itself was part of the regular worship service. On the day of baptism the child was dressed in white, often with a piece of the mother’s wedding veil adorning its face, and placed on a cushion with a cover to hold the child in place. The midwife brought the child to the church in a procession through the main streets of the town. The mother took no part in the baptism, staying in the house until after the ceremony.⁷

At the church, following the sermon, the minister and godparents approached the stone baptismal font which, in those church buildings in Zurich that predated the Reformation, had been installed during the course of the Reformation in place of the altar. While the midwife

⁶ My account of baptism in Zurich relies on Erika Welti, *Taufbräuche im Kanton Zürich: Eine Studie über ihre Entwicklung bei Angehörigen der Landeskirche seit der Reformation* (Zurich: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1967). This monograph, which chronicles changes over time in the baptism ceremony, the place and time of baptism, clothes worn by participants and food served at the celebratory meal following the baptism service, who was chosen as godparents, popular names chosen with which to christen children, etc., provides the historical level of information needed for a full analysis of baptism in Zurich.

⁷ There is an obvious opening here for a feminist analysis of this ceremony, an analysis I would classify as part of the third aspect (socio-ritual studies) in my taxonomy. Welti also cites pragmatic health concerns and issues of ritual purity in explaining this custom.

fetched the baby from the manse, the sexton went for water to pour into the font. Following the baptism this water would be dumped on the ground in front of the congregation, in an effort to prevent members of the church from making 'superstitious' use of it.

The Zurich liturgy for the baptism ceremony was as follows: (1) The minister made a brief prayer, stated that baptism admits the child to the community of Jesus Christ, and read the biblical texts used to support the practice of infant baptism (Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 10:14-16). (2) The congregation recited the Apostles' Creed, "upon which the child is baptized and in which it should be instructed."⁸ (3) The minister prayed that the child would have faith, and that the baptism would occur inwardly through the Holy Spirit. (4) The minister asked blessings on the child. (5) The minister charged the godparents with their responsibility to ensure the child's Christian upbringing, and questioned them on their willingness to do so. (6) The minister asked if it was the godparents' intention that this child be baptized, and if so, to give the child its name. (7) While either the minister or the godfather

⁸ I believe in one God, the almighty Father, the creator of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten son, our Lord.
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born from the virgin Mary.
Who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, and
descended into hell.
[Who] on the third day rose again from the dead.
[Who] ascended into heaven, where he sits on the right hand of God, the
almighty Father.
From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost.
[I believe] in one holy, universal, Christian church, which is the congregation of
saints.
[I believe in] forgiveness of sins.
Resurrection of the body.
And an eternal life. Amen.

Translated from *Liturgie für die evangelisch-reformierte Kirche des Kantons Zürich*.
Von der Synode angenommen am 28. Oktober 1868. Bound together with *Gesangbuch*
für die evangelisch-reformierte Kirche des Kantons Zürich (Zurich: Zürcher und Furrer, 1853).

held the child face down over the font, the minister poured water from the font over the back of its head and said, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (8) The minister blessed the child, and the congregation as a whole.

The child was then handed to the midwife, who returned with it to the house along the same route that the procession to the church had taken. The men often met for a drink, and then the godparents, midwife, family, and friends met at the house for a festive meal.

In the latter third of the nineteenth century this baptism ceremony found itself at the center of a heated political and religious debate.⁹ The Zurich legislature, in 1864, asked the Zurich Synod to revise the liturgy. The government had a decided political agenda, and had for several years been undertaking sweeping reforms, including replacing the patrician oligarchy that had ruled Zurich since the 1330s with a representative democracy, replacing the guild system with a free market economy, and instituting a system of universal education independent of the church. It was an “open secret” that the government, in seeking a revision, in fact wanted a “freer” liturgy “more in line with the needs and views of the present.”¹⁰

The Synod immediately split into two camps over the government’s request. The specific issue that divided them was the use of the Apostles’ Creed. A conservative faction argued that the baptism ceremony ought not to be altered, while a liberal faction argued that the Creed should be removed from the baptism ceremony. The conservatives argued from historical continuity: the Creed had been used since Zwingli’s Reformation; and from theology: the Creed, as the correct interpretation of Christianity, was the foundation of the church into

⁹ An excellent account of this debate can be found in G. Schmid, “Die Aufhebung der Verpflichtung auf das Apostolikum in der zürcherischen Kirche,” in *Festschrift für Ludwig Köhler zu dessen 70. Geburtstag* (Bern: Büchler & Co. for the Schweizerische Theologische Umschau, 1950): 83-92.

¹⁰ H[einrich] Lang, “Die Herbstsynode in Zürich,” *Zeitstimmen aus der reformirten Kirche der Schweiz* 6 (1864), 375.

which the child was being baptized.¹¹ The liberals argued from conscience: they could not, in good conscience, use a creed that committed them to belief in the immaculate conception, Jesus' descent into hell, his physical ascent into heaven, and the resurrection of the body.¹²

The debate lasted four years, and was fought out in theological journals and the popular press as well as in synod meetings. At several points the debate threatened to split the church in two. The liturgy debate had far reaching consequences. Because the Zurich church was a state church, baptism served as a civic as well as a religious rite of initiation. It was required for marriage, the military used baptism records for conscription, social services were distributed through ministers to the citizens listed in each church's baptism records—in short, baptism was required for full citizenship. It thus affected every citizen of Zurich, whether or not they were concerned with political or theological issues.

After an aborted attempt to formulate a compromise baptism ceremony, in 1868 the Synod adopted a liturgy that included two baptism ceremonies, one with the Apostles' Creed and one without. The choice of which ceremony to use was left to each minister and his congregation.

IV. Level Three (Socio-Ritual Studies): Baptism as a Strategic Arena for the Embodiment of Power Relations

The most fully worked out theory of ritual as embodied power negotiation is Catherine Bell's. What help, then, can she offer us in

¹¹ A correspondent for the *Evangelisches Wochenblatt*, the conservative organ, wrote, "where faith in the personality of God is placed in question, where the divine essence and dignity of the Son is challenged, his resurrection, his ascension, his coming again at judgment denied, eternal existence rejected—that is not a theological orientation, that is unfaith, that is anti-Christianity, there is lacking the primary requisites for a revision of a liturgy of a church that still stands on the rock foundations of God's word." "Die Revision der zürcherischen Liturgie," *Evangelisches Wochenblatt* 5 (1864), 149.

¹² Lang, "Die Herbstsynode in Zürich," 379.

analyzing the change in the baptism ceremony in nineteenth century Zurich?

Bell begins with a critique of influential theories of ritual. She argues that many theoretical approaches to ritual employ a circular argumentation. That is, they project an assumed, *a priori* dichotomy of thought/action onto the object of theoretical analysis. Approaches as diverse as those that see in ritual a means of social control, and those that see ritual as an expression of some conceptual scheme or world view, all begin with a dichotomy of thought and action. But, Bell argues, this dichotomy seems inappropriate: First, theorists inevitably wind up showing how ritual reintegrates the very thought and action that they themselves split apart (e.g., Victor Turner's *communitas*, or Clifford Geertz's "fusion" of ethos and world view). Second, this dichotomy manifests an unexamined valuation (acting is what "they" do, thinking and theorizing is what "we" do).¹³

Bell argues that we can break out of this vicious circle by re-placing ritual on the grid of all human action or practice. What is ritual used for, and how does it accomplish this work? She focuses on strategies of ritualization that serve to distinguish ritual practice from other kinds of practice. The formalization, fixity, and repetitiveness that others have seen as the defining essence of ritual Bell sees as common but not strictly necessary strategies available to ritualized activities for setting themselves off from more quotidian activities, thereby giving them a certain prestige and authority. We can then examine the uses to which this authority is put.

Strategies of ritualization, Bell maintains, produce (1) apparently fundamental oppositions (male/female, up/down, within/without), certain of which come to dominate others, and (2) ritualized agents. Because the oppositions are constructed through physical movement, the privileging of certain oppositions both constructs an environment (spa-

¹³ In addition to *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, see Catherine Bell, "Discourse and Dichotomies: The Structure of Ritual Theory," *Religion* 17 (April 1987): 98-118. I have reviewed *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* for *The Journal of Religion* (April 1993): 289-91.

tially and temporally) and impresses this environment on the bodies of participants.

Bell takes as an example the Roman Catholic Mass.¹⁴ She asserts that in the course of the Mass certain oppositions are privileged (the inner/outer opposition of distributing and ingesting the elements) and “quietly” come to dominate other oppositions (the higher/lower of raising the host, kneeling, etc.).

Bell finds support in Bourdieu for the view that binary oppositions are the fundamental building blocks of ritual:

[T]he countless oppositions observed in every area of existence can all be brought down to a small number of couples which appear as fundamental.... And almost all prove to be based on movements or postures of the human body, such as going up and coming down (or going forwards and going backwards), going to the left and going to the right, going in and coming out (or filling and emptying), sitting and standing (etc.).¹⁵

For Bell, then, ritualized movement built out of these oppositions creates ritualized agents, and constructs a physical environment that comes to be taken for granted as the way things are. Ritualized agents wield these actions sometimes in accord with, sometimes in opposition to, other ritualized agents, and in so doing negotiate the construction of their environment.

Such a view is immensely helpful in our understanding of what is at stake in the debate about baptism in Zurich. Why did the Zurich government concern themselves with infant baptism by instigating the ritual change, and why did the Synod and citizens of Zurich fight so passionately over the proposed change?

I have argued elsewhere that a certain view of history lies beneath the various reforms pushed through by the liberal government in

¹⁴ This example is fleshed out slightly, but not much, in Bell's article, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” *Worship* 63 (January 1989): 31-41.

¹⁵ Bourdieu, 118-19.

Zurich.¹⁶ In instituting a representative democracy over an oligarchy, in erecting a free market economy in which everyone is free to buy and sell goods and labor on an open market and dismantling a tightly controlled guild system, and in creating a system of universal education to give all citizens the tools to make use of their new political and economic power, the Zurich government attempted to locate power more broadly, less hierarchically. In other words, history's dynamics for them were located in individuals *qua* human beings, rather than in "great men" or privileged social classes. All individuals were significant historical agents, and the Zurich government took steps to see that, as such, all individuals had an opportunity to participate equally in the political and economic life of Zurich.¹⁷

If Bell is right that ritualized action constructs an environment that comes to be taken for granted as the way things are, and impresses this environment on the very bodies of ritualized agents, then the government was quite savvy in instigating a change in a ritual that would affect every citizen of Zurich. Bell argues that the ritual environment is a negotiated one, not under the control of any one power structure. But if an environment could be ritually constructed that was in harmony with the view that history's dynamics were located in an egalitarian rather than in a hierarchical way, then the government's controversial agenda might garnish more support. Thus, to return to my taxonomy of ritual studies, at the third level of ritual analysis, socio-ritual studies, Bell has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the ritual change in Zurich.

A problem, however, immediately arises. Bell's theory cannot account for the ritual change in Zurich. None of the changes in the baptism ceremony affected the "strategies of ritualization" she focuses on.

¹⁶ See Theodore M. Vial, "A.E. Biedermann's Filial Christology in Its Political Context," *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte/Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 3 (1996): 203-24.

¹⁷ While it lays beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note here the fact that despite the liberal theory that humans by nature are rational, women did not receive the franchise in Zurich until the 1970s.

The procession to the church remained the same, the child was still handed from (female) midwife to (male) minister and back to (female) midwife, water was still poured over the back of the child's head, etc. What changed was the words spoken during the ceremony. Do we or do we not utter the Apostles' Creed as part of the baptism ceremony? One problem stems from Bell's (and Bourdieu's) model of action. The binary oppositions they rely on to analyze the structure of ritual do not take account of speech acts.¹⁸ Clearly the change was significant to the ritual participants in Zurich, but focusing on binary oppositions leaves this change off the map. While I think Bell makes the right move in re-placing ritualized acts on the grid of all human action, we need an approach that can place all ritualized acts on this grid, including speech acts.

A second problem arises with Bell's use of binary oppositions, this one related to her example of the Catholic Mass. This is not a point I would want to push too far, but it does seem that her analysis of the Mass is driven by a particular theological view. On what basis does she claim that it is the inner/outer oppositions that in the end dominate the up/down oppositions? I suspect that this claim is motivated by a desire to have the Mass construct an egalitarian rather than a hierarchical environment. But is there any evidence that this is, in fact, the negotiated environment being constructed, or that such an environment has been impressed on the corporate and individual bodies of the Catholic church during the long history of the Mass?

The root of these problems is a flawed concept of human action. If we asked the priest or minister what he is doing, the answer surely would not be "raising and lowering," or "pouring from higher to lower." They are of course also doing that, but their action is to bless the

¹⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith argues that "in the case of man, speech and action are given together. Neither is prior, in fact or in thought." While the influences of Smith on Bell's work are clear, in privileging non-verbal acts over speech, rather than "perceiving action and speech... as being coeval modes of human cognition," Bell's theory may contribute to the "mischief" done by one-sided theories. See Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Domestication of Sacrifice," chap. in *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987): 191-92.

elements or to baptize an infant. What is at stake is our sense of what it means to be a human agent. There is a difference to the performer of the action between kneeling and catching her or himself from stumbling, or between receiving the host and eating bread, even if these actions look identical to an observer. The use of binary oppositions separates the intentional aspect of a human act from the “external” physical movements. In a sense, by separating the ritual participant’s act from the ups/downs and ins/outs apparent to an observer, who then asserts that some of these oppositions have come to dominate others, Bell has ironically let the thought/action dichotomy she so insightfully criticized in other theories of ritual in again through the back door.

V. Ritual as Directed Action

I have argued that Bell makes a significant contribution to our understanding of ritual at the level of power and its negotiation in society, but that, at the level of structure Bell’s theory of ritualized actions falls short. Further, I have claimed that this is primarily because her reliance on binary oppositions exposes an inadequate concept of human agency.

What is it that distinguishes a human act from all the other various events in the world? Bell, in a sense, has separated the agent’s intention in performing an act from the act itself. But in understanding ourselves as agents, and in interacting with others in the world, we could not function without being able to distinguish acts from things that just happen. What separates a tic from a hand signal, how do we distinguish driving away in a car from stealing a car?¹⁹ What distinguishes an act from a mere occurrence is the agent’s intention.

¹⁹ The latter example is taken from Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 95. Humphrey and Laidlaw also argue that human action is directed. For Humphrey and Laidlaw the relation between intention and act differs in ritual acts from other every day acts in that a ritual act is stipulated rather than being the agent’s own creation. Nonetheless, what makes it an act is the agent’s intention to perform that ritual act.

Charles Taylor is perhaps the foremost recent advocate of a model of human action that sees action as “directed,” as somehow “inhabited” by intention. Taylor distinguishes two “families” of answers to the question, What is the relationship of intention to action? Both sets of answers distinguish human action from other events in the world by means of intention. But each relates intention to action in a different way.²⁰

One set of answers, which Taylor calls the “Cartesian” family, distinguishes actions from other events by the causes of actions. Actions are caused by intentions, and can be explained by intentions. This kind of answer separates inner and outer event and explains the latter by means of the former. One first intends to do something, and then one enacts that intention.

A second model of human action, which Taylor calls “qualitative” or directed, sees action and purpose as ontologically inseparable. This model rejects the dualism of the Cartesian model, arguing that the human subject is inescapably embodied.²¹ Action cannot be explained by means of an intention that is prior. Action and intention are inseparable, and it makes just as much sense to explain an intention in terms of action as it does to explain action in terms of intention. Clearly when I act it is sometimes (but not always) the case that I intend to do something, and then I do it. But the intention still inheres in the action. For example, if I intend to signal someone by means of a wink, and then do it, that intention is not separate from the act of winking. What makes the wink a wink instead of a tic is my intention to signal.

²⁰ Charles Taylor, “Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind,” chap. in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 78.

²¹ Taylor, 85. This model is called qualitative because it sees human acts as qualitatively different than other events in the world, rather than seeing them as equivalent to other events in the world except that their cause is some desire or intention.

Robert Schumann, when once asked to explain a difficult étude, responded by playing it a second time.²² While one can obviously try to interpret a piece of music one has heard, Schumann's response seems to indicate a belief that if one separates the musician's intention from the "act" or performance of music, if one conceives of music as a message that then gets encoded, one has already precluded the chance of true understanding.

The model of human agency as directed has a noble pedigree. Taylor argues that this notion is central to Hegel's thought.²³ I think the view of human acts as directed is also entailed by Schleiermacher's famous second speech to religion's cultured despisers in which he argues that in addition to thinking and doing, feeling is the third human capacity that grounds the other two and gives them unity.²⁴

This directed view of agency offers several advantages over the Cartesian model. As Taylor points out, the basic intuition described by the qualitative model is not hard to grasp, but articulating it clearly is difficult.²⁵ Perhaps this clarity is best achieved by demonstrating the benefits of the qualitative model when analyzing ritualized action. There is something odd about analyzing a ritual in terms of ups and downs, ins and outs, when the participants themselves think of themselves as blessing, receiving, and baptizing. And that is because what they think they are doing constitutes part of the act itself — their intention "inheres" in the act. Bell is right that strategies of ritualization separate ritual acts such as baptism from everyday acts such as rinsing

²² This incident is recounted in George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 20.

²³ Taylor argues that Hegel stands in a movement rooted in Leibniz and, most notably, in Kant's conception of the aesthetic object in the *Third Critique*, and against Enlightenment dualism, 80.

²⁴ "[E]ven though you have not quite surrendered to this division and lost consciousness of your life as a unity, there remains nothing but the knowledge that they were originally one, that they issued simultaneously from the fundamental relation of your nature." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, 3rd. ed., trans. by John Oman (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 44.

²⁵ Taylor, 78.

a child's hair. Yet by removing intention from her analysis of ritual action, she is unable to say what the distinction symbolizes.

The first advantage of the qualitative model is that it fits our experience of our own "agent's knowledge" better than does Bell's view of action as binary oppositions, or the Cartesian view that separates intention and action. On the Cartesian model, I as an agent am immediately, incorrigibly aware of my intent or desire. "I am transparently or immediately aware of the contents of my mind."²⁶ But our experience as agents is different. I can act angrily before I become conscious that I am, in fact, angry. The qualitative model allows for this common experience. "As agents, we will already have some sense, however dim, inarticulate, or subliminal of what we are doing; otherwise, we could not speak of directing at all."²⁷ It is often the case that I only slowly come to a full awareness of my intentions, that only later can I articulate the goal of my action. On the qualitative model action is not explained by some other prior phenomenon (my intention or desire), rather the action is itself the basic phenomenon, the immediate datum.

Ritual action is often over-determined, and agents may not be fully aware of all their intentions. The participants in the Zurich debate, for example, may have been aware of theological motives for a revised baptism ceremony: "I am uncomfortable with certain articles in the Apostles' Creed, and so do not want to utter them in the context of baptism for reasons of conscience." But they may have been only dimly aware of other motives: "I like the status quo," "I want to gain power over my theological opponents by altering an important ceremony,"²⁸

²⁶ Taylor, 81.

²⁷ Taylor, 80.

²⁸ David Parkin argues that ritual is inherently a matter of contesting, that is, that participants organize ritual space as a way of setting themselves over against other groups. This clearly is an aspect of the Zurich liturgy debate, although Parkin sees the use made of ritual to "position" oneself in opposition to others far too literally. The spatial relations of a baptism ceremony in Zurich remained the same, though the conservative and liberal camps in the Synod undoubtedly "positioned" themselves against each other by using or not using the Apostles' Creed. See David Parkin,

or "I want a ceremony that better fits my liberal view of history's dynamics." Or they may have only been aware of a desire to baptize, and not been fully conscious of the implications of baptizing one way rather than another.²⁹

Directed action also seems to capture the way in which acts have meaning better than the Cartesian model. I do not decide to express anger, and then do so by means of raising my voice, nor does the church decide to baptize, and then agree on the pouring of water and the Trinitarian formula as a means to this end. As Taylor writes, expression is not a public clue to an inner state in the way that a barometer is a clue to the weather. To be angry or to baptize *is* to raise one's voice or to utter the proper formula while pouring water.³⁰

Furthermore, this model of human agency will allow us to incorporate speech acts into our analysis. If intention is separated from physical movement in actions, and attention is then focused on the physical action, speech acts will drop off the map of our analysis. The physical movements involved in speech do not break down easily into binary oppositions of the kind employed by Bell. And yet this is counter-intuitive, for speech clearly plays a major role in many rituals. The ritual change in Zurich cannot be analyzed without taking account of speech acts, and this should tip us off to the fact that the baptism, both before and after revision, cannot be explained fully without considering speech acts.

Methods for analyzing speech acts are readily at hand, and in fact they take account of intention in a manner strikingly similar to Taylor's model of directed action. We have learned to distinguish the locutionary aspect of a speech act (the sounds uttered) from the

"Ritual as Spatial Direction and Bodily Division," chap. in *Understanding Rituals*, ed. Daniel de Coppet (London: Routledge, 1992): 11-25.

²⁹ The level of intention I am arguing for in ritualized actions, as in all human actions, is necessary in the performance of all rituals, regardless of whether a ritual has become contentious or a ritual change is being instituted.

³⁰ Taylor, 91.

illocutionary force of a speech act.³¹ Imagine that we are walking by a baseball diamond and you yell “Duck!” at me. If I were to ask you what you were doing, your response would not be that you were uttering a specific string of phonemes (the speech act’s locution), but rather that you were giving a warning (your act’s illocutionary force). I could not function as a human agent were I unable to distinguish the intention that makes this act a warning. In other words, just as I can (and must) distinguish driving away in a car from stealing a car, or a tic from a hand signal, based on the intention of the actor, so I can and must distinguish the intention that makes your utterance an act of warning from other intentions that could make the identical string of phonemes a completely different speech act (imagine the same utterance, but now we are bird watching). In speech acts illocution is central to the meaning of the act. Illocution is closely related to the intention with which one utters speech. In other words, it plays the same role in analyzing speech acts as directed action plays in analyzing all acts.

The qualitative model of human action seems to be a more accurate model of our own experience as agents, and it offers several advantages over the model presumed by Bell’s binary oppositions in the analysis of ritual. It more accurately reflects the fact that ritual agents are not necessarily fully aware of their own intentions. It captures the way in which human actions seem to be endowed with meaning more accurately. And it allows us to place speech acts on our grid of ritualized actions. The separation of intention and act implied by a use of binary oppositions renders such oppositions an inadequate tool of ritual analysis. If binary oppositions are inadequate, then how are we to understand the structure of ritual? I believe that this is precisely the strong suit of the cognitive approach to ritual.

³¹ The locus classicus for this distinction is J.L. Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words*, edited by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962). Humphrey and Laidlaw point out the correspondence of illocutionary force and intentions inhering in non-verbal acts in *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual*, 91-92.

VI. Level Two (Structure): A “Cognitive” Approach to Baptism

If the “embodied negotiation of power relations” approach to ritual exemplified above by the work of Catherine Bell offers significant advances at the third level of ritual analysis (“socio-ritual studies”) but is based on an inadequate structural analysis at the second level, the converse is true of the cognitive approach. Cognitivists tend to focus on the structure of ritual acts to the exclusion of discussions about the uses participants make of ritual to set themselves off from one another, to enhance their social prestige, to construct ritualized environments, etc.

There is general agreement that the most fruitful application of cognitive theory to any of the human sciences has been the Chomskyan generative revolution in linguistics. Chomsky’s approach is called generative because he describes the capacity to produce and understand sentences by means of a relatively short list of rules. Application of these rules is said to “generate” proper sentences. Among the growing number of scholars of religion who take a cognitivist approach there have been only two full-fledged theoretical treatments of ritual along a generative model: that of Frits Staal and that of E. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley. While Staal works at the level of the arrangement of whole rituals in a larger ritual structure (the twelve day Agnicayana ritual), Lawson and McCauley work at a finer grain: the structure of individual ritual acts. It is to their work, then, that I turn to see what a cognitive approach to structure can teach us about the baptism ceremony in Zurich.

Lawson and McCauley present their theory at three levels. First, they defend the general approach, called the competence approach, that they use. Second, they offer a set of rules that “generate” ritual acts. Finally, they put forward several hypotheses that result from their approach and that are empirically testable.

First, the competence approach. It is not controversial to assert that ritual depends on rules. Gilbert Lewis, for example, argues that for something to be a ritual there must be explicit rules to guide the

action.³² But Lawson and McCauley want to describe not explicit rules that govern specific acts, but the implicit rules that govern these rules. In other words, they focus on ritual competence.

Chomsky distinguished language performance from the linguistic competence of speakers that made such performance possible. Speakers who may not be able to formulate a single explicit rule of grammar can nonetheless produce and recognize grammatically correct sentences in their native dialect. A similar distinction between performance and competence can be made in ritual. J.L. Austin gives several examples of what we might classify as ritual competence. For instance, to utter the phrase “I do” in the context of a Christian marriage normally counts as the performance of a valid ritual act. But under certain circumstances we might say that this ritual fails (in Austin’s terms, that it is “infelicitous.”) If, for example, the speaker of the phrase is already married, with a wife living and undivorced, we would reject this as a valid wedding ritual.³³ Many participants in a wedding may not be able to state explicitly that just such a rule about marriage exists, and yet anyone familiar with the most common forms of Christian marriage would make this judgment. The climax of *Jane Eyre*, for example, depends on just such a notion of ritual competence. When the solicitor Mr. Briggs interrupts the wedding ceremony of Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester to announce that Mr. Rochester already has a living wife whom he never divorced, the reader as well as the characters in the novel know instinctively that the wedding cannot go off. The very strong sense of participants that ritual is such a rule governed activity makes ritual acts a strong candidate for a competence approach that focuses on such intuitions of participants.

³² Gilbert Lewis, *Day of Shining Red: An Essay on Understanding Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 11. Humphrey and Laidlaw, 153, point out that explicitness may not be necessary. The “ritual commitment” requires not that all the participants in a ritual know the rules governing their acts, but simply that they be convinced that such rules exist, and could somehow be consulted if necessary.

³³ Austin, 8-9, 14.

By narrowing the range of data to be explained to ritual competence, Lawson and McCauley delimit an area that is amenable to explanation and empirical verification. This narrowing is their fundamental move. It is, however, controversial, because they prescind from discussing any outside reference for ritual. It is precisely the desire to analyze ritual as referring to something outside itself that Lawson and McCauley criticize in other theorists. Theories that see ritual as a means of communication, they argue, overlook the fact that “the information communicated within ritual systems only incidentally concerns the world.”³⁴ Intellectualists, in treating religion as roughly analogous to scientific attempts to explain the world, “obscure many of its important features,” including the “underlying coherence of ritual systems and the diverse functions of myth.”³⁵ Symbolists cannot offer any explicit principles for “decoding” symbols, for showing how the system of symbols refers to psychological or social systems they supposedly represent.³⁶ Lawson and McCauley conclude that the only plausible reference for religious systems is self-reference.³⁷ Their claim about Lévi-Strauss, that for him “symbol systems signify... only the human mind which produces them,” could just as easily be made about their work.³⁸

Second, having defended a competence approach to ritual in general, Lawson and McCauley then describe ritual competence by means of a set of generative rules. They investigate competence as opposed to performance by positing an idealized ritual agent. This allows them to describe the “robust intuitions” that allow all ritual participants to judge the “felicity” of ritual acts in their culture. They then formulate

³⁴ Lawson and McCauley, 55. Specifically they criticize Benjamin Ray and Edmund Leach.

³⁵ Lawson and McCauley, 37. Lawson and McCauley discuss John Skorupski and Robin Horton in particular.

³⁶ Lawson and McCauley, 38, 39. Victor Turner and Dan Sperber are their targets here.

³⁷ Lawson and McCauley, 148.

³⁸ Lawson and McCauley, 147.

a set of rules that describes the way such an idealized agent represents actions to her or himself.

Linguists describe the structure of the basic unit of communication—a sentence—by means of “rewriting” rules: sentences can be rewritten as Noun and Verb Phrase; Verb Phrase can be rewritten as Verb and Noun (Object); etc. The way these components are organized can be described by a relatively small number of such rules. These rules describe the intuitive knowledge that makes a native speaker competent to produce and recognize correct sentences that she or he has never before encountered.

The basic unit of human action is not a sentence but an act.³⁹ An act can be broken down (“rewritten”) as an Agent, an Action, and (in many cases) an Object. So far Lawson and McCauley have only managed to formalize what is surely common sense. But their rules bring several important issues to the foreground. They claim that religious ritual is distinguished from other human activity because at some point in the act a superhuman agent will play a role. Thus, the list (“lexicon”) of possible agents and actions that fill the structural slots in a religious ritual is larger than the “lexicon” for everyday activity because it includes special agents, actions, and objects, as well as everyday ones.

Further, their rules give a rigorous way to include additional information about the components of an act. For example, not just anyone could baptize in the Reformed church in Zurich, but only a minister. When a member of the Reformed church represented to her or himself the act “Minister baptizes child,” included in this representation is the fact that the minister had a special quality. He was ordained. This is precisely the kind of information that is left out of a ritual analysis using Bell’s binary oppositions.

In other words, Lawson and McCauley’s system of describing ritual structure allows for the embedding of previous rituals. Why could a minister baptize? Because he was ordained. Why was this ordination valid? Because it in turn had been performed by an ordained minister.

³⁹ Let me point out here that, without a notion of intention, it is impossible to break down the unbroken stream of activities that constitutes our life into individual acts.

This sets up a regress of embedded rituals. But the regress is not infinite. Eventually, in the Reformed representation, embedded in each celebration of baptism is the institution of the church by Jesus. This act by a superhuman agent is the act that ultimately makes the minister a legitimate celebrator of baptism.⁴⁰

In the end, then, the liturgy debate in Zurich was about christology. By virtue of what quality was Jesus a legitimate ritual agent embedded in the baptism ceremony? For the conservatives, only an immaculately conceived Jesus who descended into hell, then ascended into heaven, and was bodily resurrected could send out his chosen followers to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁴¹ To posit a less supernatural agent at the base of the chain of rituals embedded in baptism would be to posit an illegitimate ritual agent and thus render the baptism infelicitous, ungrammatical. For the liberals the opposite was the case. For them such a supernatural Jesus existed outside of history, and therefore could not exist at all. To posit an impossible or non-existent ritual agent at the base of the baptism ceremony would render it invalid. It would be equivalent to saying “I do” with the full knowledge that one already has an insane spouse locked up in the attic. We need not digress into the liberals’ christology here, but suffice it to say that for them it was Jesus’ intense awareness that he, like all humans, was a finite concrete moment in the process of infinite spirit that so affected his followers that they gathered around him and founded the church. The liberals firmly placed Jesus in history with everyone else, and so, one might say, they located religious power more broadly, less hierarchically.⁴²

⁴⁰ Lawson and McCauley argue that one of the characteristics that distinguishes religious ritual from other kinds of acts is that our representations of other acts can have an infinite regress embedded in them. The representation of a religious ritual, however, will eventually come to a firm stopping place, which will always be the action of a superhuman agent.

⁴¹ Matt. 28:19, New Revised Standard Version.

⁴² For a full discussion of the liberal christology, see my article, “A.E. Biedermann’s Filial Christology in Its Political Context,” note 16 above.

Third and finally, Lawson and McCauley claim that describing the structure of rituals in this way leads to a set of universal principles that explain certain interesting features of ritual. For example, they claim that if the superhuman agent embedded in a religious ritual is embedded in the “agent” slot of a ritual action, as opposed to the “action” or “object” slot, then the ritual will not be repeated. This is true of baptism. In the end the minister (agent) is a legitimate ritual agent because of the act of Jesus founding the church. Baptism is a one-time affair. Participants will, however, repeat rituals in which the superhuman agent is involved in the “action” or “object” slot. The Lord’s Supper, for example, involves the superhuman agent in the “object” slot (the blessed host). If we represent the Lord’s Supper as “Participant receives elements,” it is because Christ is somehow present in the elements (and just how is very contentious in the history of Christian theology) that this is a legitimate ritual. Participants repeat this ritual periodically.

Further, Lawson and McCauley claim that the more “removed” the superhuman agent is from the ritual in question, the less central this ritual will be for the religion. For example, because of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, in which the superhuman being is directly present in the elements, the Mass is a central ritual for the Catholic church. The Lord’s Supper will not be as central (or at least it will share the stage with other activities such as preaching, for example) for groups with weaker doctrines of the presence of Christ in the elements. Zurich offers empirical support for this assertion as well. Zwingli famously argued that Jesus’ statement “This is my body” (Matt. 21:21, 1 Cor. 11:24) means that the bread *signifies* Christ’s body, not that the bread *becomes* Christ’s body. The fact that the Reformers in Zurich replaced the altar where the Catholic Mass had been performed with the stone baptismal font demonstrates that Lawson and McCauley’s theory has accurately predicted the relative importance of these rituals in the two traditions.

VII. Conclusion

Bourdieu himself has argued that an adequate “dialectical” account of action depends on an adequate structural account.⁴³ It appears that the cognitive approach to ritual structure is a more adequate account than the binary oppositions used by Bell and Bourdieu. It allows us to take into consideration a range of important factors such as the special qualities of certain agents and objects that are moving or being moved up and down and in and out. Furthermore, the cognitive approach takes into account what it is that the participants themselves think they are doing. Surely this is central to the question of what environment it is that is being constructed and impressed on the participants’ bodies. Without taking into account the participants’ own representations of their actions, we leave out one of the most important factors that sustains ritual practice and makes it meaningful in the first place. Finally, the cognitive approach allows us to include speech acts on the grid of human actions under analysis.

But if the cognitivists offer a better analysis of ritual structure, they say very little about the social and political uses of ritual. Thus, sketching out the ritual of baptism in Zurich using Lawson and McCauley’s rules, we discover that at stake in the fight over baptism was a christological debate. For the conservatives, history made no sense without a divine Christ standing outside of history. For the liberals, such a figure violated all they knew about history’s dynamics, and so could not be a real historical person. But Lawson and McCauley cannot explain why the government requested a ritual change, why the debate took place, or why it was so heated. The baptism change only makes sense if we focus on questions of political negotiation and power posed by Bell.

Finally, I hope to have offered evidence that a view of human action as directed is a more adequate model of human action for the analysis of ritual. Specifically, it can support and combine both approaches to ritual discussed in this article. Directed action allows us to place speech

⁴³ Bourdieu, 3.

acts on the same grid as all other human acts. It corresponds to our sense that, in constructing and impressing an environment, the agents' intentions, which are integral to the actions, play a crucial role. This directed model of agency fits our experience that we are not always fully aware of our intentions, but that in a very real sense there is no act without intention. The disputants in Zurich may not have been fully aware of all the implications of the ritual change they argued about. Nonetheless, in intending to baptize one way rather than another, they positioned themselves in the political and cultural clashes of their day.

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ORIENTALISM AND THE MODERN MYTH OF “HINDUISM”

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Summary

Is there really a single ancient religion designated by the catch-all term ‘Hinduism’ or is the term merely a fairly recent social construction of Western origin? This paper examines the role played by Orientalist scholars in the construction of Western notions of Indian religion by an examination of the origins of the concept of ‘Hinduism’. It is argued that the notion of ‘Hinduism’ as a single world religion is a nineteenth century construction, largely dependent upon the Christian presuppositions of the early Western Orientalists. However, exclusive emphasis upon the role of Western Orientalists constitutes a failure to acknowledge the role played by key indigenous informants (mostly from the *brāhmaṇa* castes) in the construction of modern notions of ‘the Hindu religion’. To ignore the indigenous dimension of the invention of ‘Hinduism’ is to erase the colonial subject from history and perpetuate the myth of the passive Oriental. The paper concludes with a discussion of the accuracy and continual usefulness of the term ‘Hinduism’.

[I]t would appear that there is an intrinsic connection between the ‘Hinduism’ that is being constructed in the political arena and the ‘Hinduism’ of academic study.¹

Today, there are perhaps two powerful images in contemporary Western characterizations of Eastern religiosity. One is the continually enduring notion of the ‘mystical East’ — a powerful image precisely because for some it represents what is most disturbing and outdated about Eastern culture, whilst for others it represents the magic, the mystery and the sense of the spiritual which they perceive to be lacking in modern Western culture. The depravity and backwardness

¹ Friedhelm Hardy (1995), “A Radical Reassessment of the Vedic Heritage — The *Ācāryahṛdayam* and its Wider Implications,” in Vasudha Dalmia and H. von Stietencron (1995), *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity* (Sage Publications, New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London), p. 48.

of the Orient thus appears to sit side by side with its blossoming spirituality and cultural richness. Both of these motifs have a long historical pedigree, deriving from the hopes and fears of the European imagination and its perennial fascination with the East.

The second image of Eastern religion — one indeed that is increasingly coming to the fore in Western circles, is that of the 'militant fanatic.' Such a characterization also has a considerable ancestry, being a contemporary manifestation of older colonial myths about Oriental despotism and the irrationality of the colonial subject. The particular nature of this construct is of course heavily influenced by the secularist perspective of much of modern Western culture. The image of the militant fanatic or religious 'fundamentalist,' whilst frequently interwoven with 'the mystical' characterization (particularly in the emphasis which Western commentators place upon the 'religious' dimension of conflicts such as Ayodhyā in India), it is rarely explicitly associated with the notion of 'the mystical East' precisely because modern Western understandings of 'the mystical' tend to preclude the possibility of an authentic mystical involvement in political struggle. The other-worldly Eastern mystic cannot be involved in a this-worldly political struggle without calling into question the strong cultural opposition between the mystical and the public realms. The discontinuity between these two cultural representations of the East has frequently created problems for Western and Western-influenced observers who find it difficult to reconcile notions of spiritual detachment with political (and sometimes violent) social activism.²

Thus, in the modern era we find Hinduism being represented both as a globalized and all-embracing world-religion and as an intolerant and virulent form of religious nationalism. Despite the apparent incongruity of these two representations, I will argue in this paper that one feature which both characterizations share in common is the debt they owe to Western Orientalism. My argument does not entail that the modern concept of "Hinduism" is *merely* the product

² See Mark Juergensmeyer (1990), "What The Bhikkhu Said: Reflections On The Rise Of Militant Religious Nationalism," in *Religion* 20, pp. 53-76.

of Western Orientalism. Western influence was a necessary but not a sufficient causal factor in the rise of this particular social construction. To argue otherwise would be to ignore the crucial role played by indigenous Brahmanical ideology in the formation of early Orientalist representations of Hindu religiosity.

Orientalism and the Quest for a Post-Colonial Discourse

[A]nthropologists who would study, say, Muslim beliefs and practices will need some understanding of how “religion” has come to be formed as concept and practice in the modern West. For while religion is integral to modern Western history, there are dangers in employing such a normalizing concept when translating Islamic traditions.³

This statement by Talal Asad can be equally well applied to the study of Asian culture in general. In recent years scholars involved in such study have become increasingly aware of the extent to which Western discourses about Asia reflect power relations between Western and Asian societies. In the postcolonial era, it has become imperative, therefore, to examine this relationship with critical acumen.

In 1978 Edward Said published his ground-breaking work, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*.⁴ In this book, Said launched a stinging critique of Western notions of the East and the ways in which “Orientalist discourse” has legitimated the colonial aggression and political supremacy of the Western world.

Said’s work, however, is notable for a number of obvious omissions. His analysis of French, British and, to a limited degree, American

³ Talal Asad (1993), *Genealogies of Religion: Disciplines and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (John Hopkins University Press, London), p. 1.

⁴ Said’s work is clearly indebted to earlier works which have focused upon the Western construction of images of Asian culture and its people. Important works here are Raymond Schwab (1950), *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Discovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (English translation, 1984, Columbia University Press, New York) and John M. Steadman (1969), *The Myth of Asia* (Macmillan, Basingstoke). However, the first work which appears to focus upon the way in which Orientalism functions ideologically as a support for colonial hegemony is Anwar Abdel Malek’s (1963), “Orientalism in Crisis,” in *Diogenes* 44.

Orientalism does not touch upon the strong tradition of Orientalist scholarship in Germany, where it was not accompanied by a colonial empire in the East. In fact, Sheldon Pollock has shown how German Orientalist analysis of Indian Vedic lore, profoundly affected Germany by furnishing a racially-based, Indo-European myth of the pure Aryan race, which could subsequently be used to distinguish the Semites as "non-Aryan."⁵ Thus, not only has Said's work ignored important currents within European Orientalist discourse, it has also tended to ignore the ways in which such discourses affect the colonizer as well as the colonized.⁶ Indeed, the examples of German Orientalists on the one hand, and Japan on the other, cast doubt upon Said's thesis that Orientalist discourse is always associated with an imperial agenda, since Germany had no Eastern empire to manipulate and control, and Japan was subjected to Orientalist discourses without ever being colonized by the West.⁷

Sheldon Pollock's discussion of German Orientalism suggests that the authoritative power of such discourses could equally be applied at home to create a powerful 'internal narrative,' in this case instrumental in the construction of a German national consciousness, and ultimately in the hands of the National Socialists in "the colonization and domination of Europe itself." Jayant Lele has argued that as well as its obvious consequences for Asia, Orientalism also functions to insulate the Occident from the self-analysis which would be involved in a proper engagement with the cultures and perspectives of the non-Western world. He further suggests that Orientalist discourses censure attempts to analyse the West in a self-critical and comparative manner,

⁵ Sheldon Pollock (1993), "Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power Beyond the Raj," in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia), pp. 76-133.

⁶ One should note here that insofar as Said ignores the effect of Orientalist narratives upon the colonizer he does not follow Foucault's analysis which attempts to demonstrate the sense in which discourses construct both the subject and the object.

⁷ Richard H. Minear (1980), "Orientalism and the Study of Japan," in *Journal of Asian Studies* XXXIX, No. 3, pp. 507-517.

by misrepresenting both Asian and Western culture. Thus, “through a culturally imposed stupefaction of the people” both Western and non-Western people are manipulated and subjugated through the “same project of control and exploitation.”⁸ This is a point rarely noticed by critics of Orientalism, namely, that in representing the Orient as the essentialized and stereotypical “Other” of the West, the heterogeneity and complexity of both Oriental and Occidental remain silenced.⁹

Critics of Said’s work have suggested that he places too much emphasis on the passivity of the native,¹⁰ and that he does not really discuss, nor even allow for, the ways in which indigenous peoples of the East have used, manipulated and constructed their own positive responses to colonialism using Orientalist conceptions. Homi Bhabha’s notion of ‘hybridity’ for instance reflects an awareness that colonial discourses are deeply ambivalent and not susceptible to the constraints of a single uni-directional agenda. Thus, Bhabha argues, the master discourse is appropriated by the native whose cultural resistance is manifested through the mimicry and parody of colonial authority.¹¹ In

⁸ Jayant Lele (1993), “Orientalism and the Social Sciences,” in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, p. 59.

⁹ Ashis Nandy (1983), *The Intimate Enemy* (Oxford University Press, Delhi), pp. 71-74. Nandy, by way of a broadly psychoanalytic account of cultural interchange, suggests that the Orientalist projection of the East as the West’s inverse double or “other” is a reflection of the suppressed ‘shadow’ side of Western culture. It is in this sense that we can see how the Enlightenment subordinated the poetic, the mystical, and the feminine elements within European culture and projected such qualities onto the Orient.

¹⁰ See for instance, Benita Parry (1992), “Overlapping Territories and Intertwined Histories: Edward Said’s Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism,” in M. Sprinker (ed.) (1992), *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* (Blackwell, Oxford), p. 34. See also Peter van der Veer (1993), “The Foreign Hand. Orientalist Discourse in Sociology and Communalism,” in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, p. 23, and Rosalind O’Hanlon (1989), “Cultures of Rule, Communities of Resistance: Gender, Discourse and Tradition in Recent South Asian Historiographies,” in *Social Analysis* 25, p. 109.

¹¹ See for instance Homi Bhabha (1985), “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817,” in *Critical Inquiry* 12, pp. 144-165.

similar fashion Richard G. Fox has pointed to the ways in which Sikh reformers in the 1920's accepted Orientalist stereotypes of the Sikh, and yet used them to create a mass movement in opposition to British colonialism.¹² The same transformation can be seen in the Hindu context, where Orientalist presuppositions about the "spirituality" of India etc. were used by reformers such as Rammohun Roy, Dayānanda Saraswati, Swāmi Vivekānanda and Mohandas K. Gandhi in the development of an anti-colonial Hindu nationalism. This no doubt reflects not only the level of permeation of Orientalist ideas amongst the native population of India (especially the colonially educated intelligentsia), but also the fact that such discourses do not proceed in an orderly and straightforward fashion, being in fact adapted and applied in ways unforeseen by those who initiated them. Thus, Orientalist discourses were appropriated by native Indians in the nineteenth century and applied in such a way as to undercut the colonialist agenda, which, Said suggests, is implicated in such discourses.

We have already seen that Said's own negative appraisal of Orientalism does not appear to leave room for indigenous appropriations of Orientalist discourses for positive, anti-colonial goals. Equally, his work places little emphasis upon what Clifford calls a "sympathetic, nonreductive Orientalist tradition."¹³ Richard Fox refers to this strand as "affirmative Orientalism" and has in mind such Western apologists for Indian culture as the Theosophist Annie Besant, Hindu convert Sister Nivedita, and apostle of non-violence, Tolstoy etc.¹⁴ In this context, one should examine what is probably the most scathing critique of Said to date. David Kopf attacks Said for "dropping names, dates and anecdotes" and for adopting a method "which is profoundly structural

¹² Richard G. Fox (1992), "East of Said," in Sprinker (ed.) (1992), *ibid.*, p. 146. But see Peter van der Veer (1994), *Religious Nationalism. Hindus and Muslims in India* (University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London), pp. 53-56, where it is argued that Sikh identity was utilized but not constructed by the British.

¹³ Clifford (1988), *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 261.

¹⁴ Richard Fox (1992), *ibid.*, p. 152.

and synchronic" and thus "diametrically opposed to history."¹⁵ Whilst Kopf sees a great deal of merit in Said's work, he decries the use of the term "Orientalism" to "represent a sewer category for all the intellectual rubbish Westerners have exercised in the global marketplace of ideas" (p. 498). Kopf, in fact, believes that Said has provided an overly negative and one-sided analysis, which fails to take into account the positive elements within Orientalist discourses. He suggests that modern Orientalism was born in Calcutta in 1784 with the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and that, as such, British Orientalism can be said to have given birth to the Bengal Renaissance since it "helped Indians to find an indigenous identity in the modern world" (p. 501). Kopf suggests that these Orientalists "were men of social action, working to modernize Hindu culture from within" (p. 502). These are to be contrasted, Kopf argues, with the anti-Orientalist Westernizers, as represented by the staunch Anglicist Thomas B. Macauley, for whom "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."¹⁶ Kopf comments, "It is curious to me that Said completely ignores this very group of proto-imperialists who were anti-Orientalist. It is their ideology and not that of the Orientalists which Said reviews in his work" (p. 503).

If we examine Kopf's position more closely we shall see the source of dispute and confusion between him and Said. Kopf praises the modernizing efforts of the Orientalists who,

served as avenues linking the regional élite with the dynamic civilization of contemporary Europe. They contributed to the formation of a new Indian middle

¹⁵ David Kopf (1980), "Hermeneutics versus History," in *Journal of Asian Studies* XXXIX, No. 3, May 1980, p. 499. Rosane Rocher also argues that Said's approach "does to orientalist scholarship what it accuses orientalist scholarship of having done to the countries East of Europe; it creates a single discourse, undifferentiated in space and time and across political, social and intellectual identities." Rosane Rocher (1993), "British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectic of Knowledge and Government," in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁶ Macauley's Minute of Education (1835), quoted in Kopf (1980), *ibid.*, p. 504, but originally quoted in Kopf (1969), *British Orientalism and The Bengal Renaissance* (University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London), p. 248.

class and assisted in the professionalization of the Bengali intelligentsia. They started schools, systematized languages, brought printing and publishing to India, and encouraged the proliferation of books, journals, newspapers, and other media of communication. Their output was urban and secular. They built the first modern scientific laboratories in India and taught European medicine. They were neither static classicists nor averse to the idea of progress, and they historicized the Indian past and stimulated consciousness of history in the Indian intellectual.¹⁷

What is striking about this description of the activities of British Orientalists in India is that Kopf praises them so unequivocally, whilst critics such as Said (and I would include myself here) find such activities deeply problematic. Kopf's dispute with Said is really a debate about the extent to which one can differentiate modernization from westernization. Kopf's view is that the two can be easily differentiated and that the Orientalists were solely in favour of modernization, whilst Anglicists like Macauley were fervently in favour of both.¹⁸ Thus, according to Kopf "nineteenth century Europe was not so much the source of modernity as it was the setting for modernizing processes that were themselves transforming Western cultures," and that for the Orientalist, "the important thing was to set into motion the process of modernization through which Indians might change themselves according to their own value system."¹⁹

However, it seems at best naively simplistic, and at worst downright false, to suggest that we can drive a firm wedge between westernization and modernization. What usually counts as "modernity" seems to be bound up with attitudes and social changes that derive from the European Enlightenment. Thus, despite the claimed cultural and political

¹⁷ David Kopf (1969), *ibid.*, p. 275, quoted by the author in Kopf (1980), *ibid.*, pp. 502-503.

¹⁸ David Kopf (1969), *ibid.*, pp. 275-276.

¹⁹ David Kopf (1969), *ibid.*, pp. 277-278. For Kopf then it is merely a historical accident that the social process of modernization began in Europe (p. 276). However, even if this were the case, it is still naive to believe that one can export the results of this process without also exporting those features which are peculiarly European in nature.

neutrality of the language of “modernization,” and their dispute with the Anglicists, Kopf’s (affirmative) Orientalists were still involved in the Europeanization of the Orient, and, even when they appeared to be promoting the vernacular and the indigenous, their methods, goals and underlying values presupposed the supremacy of European culture. That this is so can be seen even by an examination of the quotations which Kopf elicits as evidence of the Orientalists’ opposition to westernization. Thus, he quotes H. H. Wilson, whom he describes as “one of the greatest Orientalists” as promoting the cultivation of Sanskrit so that native dialects may “embody European learning and science.”²⁰ Again, W. H. MacNaughten is quoted as attacking the westernizer’s position on the grounds that “if we wish to enlighten the great mass of the people in India we must use as our instruments the Languages of India. . . our object is to impart ideas, not words . . .”²¹ Thus, despite Kopf’s protestation to the contrary, the Orientalists were also acting in complicity with European imperial aspirations even if their rhetoric was less confrontational, aggressive and condescending. The complexity of the issues surrounding the Anglicists vs. the Orientalists in the postcolonial era is reflected, for instance, in Gayatri Spivak’s refusal to endorse a blanket return to “native” languages in India. It is perhaps important to note that English has become increasingly “nativized” in colonial and postcolonial India, and still represents a much greater potential for international interaction (albeit due to British imperial hegemony) than the ‘native’ languages. Nevertheless, Spivak suggests an “inter-literary” approach, arguing that “the teaching of English literature can become critical only if it is intimately yoked to the teaching of the literary or cultural production in the mother tongue.”²²

The colonial prejudices of such ‘eminent scholars’ of the Orient as William Jones and James Mill (father of John Stuart Mill), is evident in their work. William Jones has been described as the Western

²⁰ David Kopf (1980), *ibid.*, p. 505.

²¹ David Kopf (1969), *ibid.*, p. 250, quoted again in Kopf (1980), *ibid.*, p. 504.

²² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993), “The Burden of English,” in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, p. 151.

scholar most responsible for first introducing a “textualized” India to Europeans.

The most significant nodes of William Jones’ work are (a) the need for translation by the European, since the natives are unreliable interpreters of their own laws and culture; (b) the desire to be a law-giver, to give the Indians their “own” laws; and (c) the desire to “purify” Indian culture and speak on its behalf. . . . In Jones’ construction of the “Hindus”, they appear as a submissive, indolent nation unable to appreciate the fruits of freedom, desirous of being ruled by absolute power, and sunk deeply in the mythology of an ancient religion.²³

As Tejaswini Niranjana suggests, “This Romantic Orientalist project slides almost imperceptibly into the Utilitarian, Victorian enterprise of ‘improving’ the natives through English education.”²⁴ James Mill’s three volumed *History of British India* (1817) continues to be influential in its monolithic approach to Indian culture, its homogenizing references to “Hinduism,” and its highly questionable periodization of Indian history.²⁵

It is naive of Kopf to believe that all Orientalists were opponents of westernization. He fails to see both the polyphonic nature and multiple layers of colonial discourse, nor does he seem to have attempted to lift the veil of rhetorical subterfuges which often occlude imperialistic motivations. Consequently, Kopf argues that “Orientalism was the polar opposite of Eurocentric imperialism as viewed by the Asians themselves. . . . If Orientalism was merely the equivalent of imperialism, . . .” he asks, “. . . then how do we account for the increasingly nostalgic view of Orientalists nurtured by later generations of Hindu intelligentsia?”²⁶ Our answer to this question has already been put forward in the recognition that the ‘Hindu intelligentsia’ were themselves influenced by the West’s stereotypical portrayal of “the Orient.”

²³ Tejaswini Niranjana (1990), “Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English,” in *Economic and Political Weekly* XXV, No. 15, April 14th 1990, p. 774.

²⁴ Tejaswini Niranjana (1990), *ibid.*, p. 775.

²⁵ See Romila Thapar (1992), *Interpreting Early India* (Oxford University Press, Delhi), pp. 5-6; 89; Peter van der Veer (1993) in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.), *ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁶ David Kopf (1980), *ibid.*, p. 505.

The extent to which the Anglicist Macauley was successful in his aim “to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect,”²⁷ will become readily apparent later when we consider the development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the notion of a single religious entity known as “Hinduism.” The notion of a Hindu religion, I suggest, was initially constructed by Western Orientalists based upon a Judaeo-Christian understanding of what might constitute a religion. This construct, of course, was subsequently adopted by Hindu nationalists themselves in the quest for home rule (*swaraj*) and in response to British imperial hegemony.

Orientalism and Indology

Edward Said's examples are mainly taken from the “Middle-Eastern” context, no doubt a reflection of his own Palestinian origins, and it has been left to others to explore the implications of his work further afield. In recent years, with the publication of Wilhelm Halbfass (1988), *India and Europe. An Essay in Understanding*, and Ronald Inden (1990), *Imagining India*, the Orientalist problematic has been discussed in relation to the study of Indian religion and philosophy.²⁸ Inden, for instance, suggests that Indological analysis functions to portray Indian thoughts, institutions and practices as aberrations or distortions of normative (i.e., Western) patterns of behaviour.²⁹ According to Inden, Indological discourse transforms Indians into subjugated objects of a su-

²⁷ Macauley (1835), ‘Minute on Indian Education,’ quoted in Tejaswini Niranjana (1990), “Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English,” in *Economic and Political Weekly* XXV, No. 15, April 14th 1990, p. 778.

²⁸ For a recent collection of works responding to Halbfass’ interventions in the Orientalist debate see Eli Franco and Karin Preisendanz (eds), (1997), *Beyond Orientalism. The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and its Impact on Indian and Cross-Cultural Studies* (Rodopi, Amsterdam, Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities), 673 pp.

²⁹ Ronald Inden (1986), “Orientalist Constructions of India,” in *Modern Asian Studies* 20, No. 3, p. 411.

perior (i.e. higher-order) knowledge, which remains in the possession of the Western Indological expert. This is because Indological works do not provide merely descriptive accounts of that which they study, but also provide commentaries which claim to *represent* the thoughts and actions of the Indian subject in such a manner as to communicate their general nature or "essence" to the Western reader. Inden is also critical of 'hegemonic' accounts which provide reductionist and causal explanations for the "irrational" behaviour of Indians (irrational in the sense that it requires explanation to the rational Westerner). Such reductionist accounts suggest that

Indian civilization is, thus, unlike the West, fundamentally a product of its environment, and a defective product at that. European civilization is the product of rational human action. Especially since the so-called Enlightenment the West has been guided by scientific reason in shaping its institutions and beliefs.... Modern science has acquired privileged knowledge of the natural world. It has made a 'copy' of that external reality unprecedented in its accuracy. The institutions of the West have therefore come more closely to conform to what is, in this discourse, 'natural'. Traditional and non-Western societies have, because of their inaccurate or false copies of external reality, made relatively ineffective adaptations to their environments. They have not evolved as fast as the modern West.³⁰

Inden, however, seems to overstate his case at times. I do not accept that all explanations of Indian thought and behaviour imply the irrationality of Indians. Explanations are necessary because Indian culture is different from Western culture in many respects; rejecting Orientalist projections of an "Other", will not smooth over these differences. Providing an insightful account of Indian thought for the Western reader, whilst it may involve some distortion of the material under consideration is necessary for this reason and not because Europeans are superior or more rational than Indians. Equally, reductionist accounts can be, and increasingly are being, applied to Western history and culture itself. In fact, one might argue that the current wave of postmodern anxiety about the foundations of Western

³⁰ Inden (1986), *ibid.*, p. 441, 415.

civilization is partly a consequence of historicist and reductionist analysis being applied reflexively to the West itself!

Inden, thus provides us with a highly polemical and generally negative account of Indological scholarship.³¹ His analysis, however, is insightful on innumerable occasions and contains a number of salient points. He suggests that Indological scholarship in the past has been dominated by the privileged voice of the 'positivist' and the 'empirical realist'.³² Inden, at times reminiscent of the neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty and the philosopher of science Paul Feyerband, rejects what he describes as the 'positivist' claim that there is "a single, determinate reality" and that the tools of Western science have privileged access to that reality through forms of knowledge which directly correspond or 'mirror' it.

I reject the duality of knower and known presupposed by this episteme. It is my position that knowledge both participates in the construction of reality and is itself not simply natural (in the sense of necessary and given), but, in large part, constructed.³³

Inden also suggests that the essentialism inherent in most Orientalist discourses should be comprehensively refuted. This is the tendency within most Indological accounts to claim to have uncovered the "essence" of the object under consideration, through careful scholarly analysis. Thus, works which purport to explain the "Oriental mind-set" or the "Indian mentality" etc., presuppose that there is a homogenous, and almost-Platonic "essence" or "nature" which can be directly intuited by the Indological expert. Inden is correct, in my view, to attack

³¹ Richard G. Fox criticizes Inden for his condemnation of "all South Asian scholarship as Orientalist". According to Fox, Inden's work displays just those stereotyping tendencies in his approach to Orientalist scholarship as he attacks in the scholarship itself, though this may reflect a lack of appreciation on Fox's part of the extent to which even "affirmative Orientalism" contributes to European hegemony over the East. See Richard G. Fox (1992), "East of Said," in M. Sprinker, *ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

³² Inden (1986), *ibid.*, p. 440.

³³ Inden (1986), *ibid.*, pp. 444-445. As with Edward Said, we can clearly see the influence of Foucault on Inden's work.

such essentialism, rooted as it is in the Enlightenment belief in a unified human nature, not just because it misrepresents the heterogeneity of the subject-matter, but also because of the way in which such essentialism results in the construction of a cultural stereotype which may then be used to subordinate, classify and dominate the non-Western world.

Inden's work, however, is also interesting for his critical analysis of "affirmative Orientalism." This strand of Orientalist discourse, labelled 'romantic' by Inden because of its indebtedness to European Romanticism, is generally motivated by an admiration for, and sometimes by a firm belief in, the superiority of Eastern cultures. The romantic image of India portrays Indian culture as profoundly spiritual, idealistic and mystical. Thus, as Peter Marshall points out

As Europeans have always tended to do, they created Hinduism in their own image. Their study of Hinduism confirmed their beliefs and Hindus emerged from their work as adhering to something akin to undogmatic Protestantism. Later generations of Europeans, interested themselves in mysticism, were able to portray the Hindus as mystics.³⁴

We would do well to note the reason why Inden criticizes the Romantic conception of India as the 'Loyal Opposition.' This reflects the fact that 'Romantic Orientalism' agrees with the prevailing view that India is the mirror-opposite of Europe; it continues to postulate cultural "essences" and, thus, perpetuates the same (or at least similar) cultural stereotypes about the East. The Romanticist view of the Orient, then, is still a distortion, even if motivated at times by a respect for the Orient. As such, it participates in the projection of stereotypical forms which allows for a domestication and control of the East.

What is interesting about the "mystical" or "spiritual" emphasis which predominates in the Romanticist conception of India is not just that it has become a prevalent theme in contemporary Western images of India, but also that it has exerted a great deal of influence upon the

³⁴ Peter Marshall (1970), *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), p. 43-4, quoted in Inden (1986), *ibid.*, p. 430.

self-awareness of the very Indians which it purports to describe. Some might argue, as David Kopf clearly does, that such endorsement by Indians themselves suggests the anti-imperial nature of such discourses, yet one cannot ignore the sense in which British colonial ideology, through the various media of communication, education and institutional control has made a substantial contribution to the construction of modern identity and self-awareness amongst contemporary Indians.

European translations of Indian texts prepared for a Western audience provided to the 'educated' Indian a whole range of Orientalist images. Even when the anglicised Indian spoke a language other than English, 'he' would have preferred, because of the symbolic power attached to English, to gain access to his own past through the translations and histories circulating through colonial discourse. English education also familiarised the Indian with ways of seeing, techniques of translation, or modes of representation that came to be accepted as 'natural'.³⁵

Perhaps the primary examples of this are the figures of Swāmi Vivekānanda and Mohandas K. Gandhi.³⁶ Vivekānanda (1863-1902) founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, an organization devoted to the promotion of a contemporary form of Advaita Vedānta (non-dualism), placed particular emphasis upon the spirituality of Indian culture as a curative to the nihilism and materialism of modern Western culture. In Vivekānanda's hands, Orientalist notions of India as "other worldly" and "mystical" were embraced and praised as India's special gift to humankind. Thus the very discourse which succeeded in alienating, subordinating and controlling India was used by Vivekānanda as a religious clarion-call for the Indian people to unite under the banner of a universalistic and all-embracing Hinduism.

Up India, and conquer the world with your spirituality... Ours is a religion of which Buddhism, with all its greatness is a rebel child and of which Christianity is a very patchy imitation.

³⁵ Tejaswini Niranjana (1990), "Translation, Colonialism and Rise of English," in *Economic and Political Weekly* XXV, No. 15, April 14th 1990, p. 778.

³⁶ Mohandas Gandhi, too, was also influenced by Western, Orientalist conceptions of India, only really discovering the fruits of India's religious traditions through the Romanticist works of the Theosophical Society. For a discussion of this and its relevance to the Orientalist debate see Fox (1992), in Sprinker (1992), *ibid*, pp. 152f.

The salvation of Europe depends on a rationalistic religion, and Advaita — non-duality, the Oneness, the idea of the Impersonal God, — is the only religion that can have any hold on any intellectual people.³⁷

Colonial stereotypes thereby became transformed and used in the fight *against* colonialism. Despite this, stereotypes they remain! Vivekānanda's importance, however, far outweighs his involvement with the Ramakrishna Mission. He attended (without invitation) the First World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, delivering a lecture on Hinduism (or at least on his own conception of the nature of Hinduism and its relationship with the other “world-religions”). Vivekānanda was a great success and initiated a number of successful tours of the United States and Europe. In the West he was influential in the reinforcement of the Romanticist emphasis upon Indian spirituality, and in India Vivekānanda became the focus of a renascent intellectual movement, which might more accurately be labelled “Neo-Hinduism” or “Neo-Vedānta” rather than “Hinduism.”

The Myth of Homogeneity and the Modern Myth of ‘Hinduism’

Scepticism about the applicability of globalized, highly abstract and univocal systems of thought onto the religious experience of humankind (as manifested by the “world-religions” approach to the study of religions) has been expressed by scholars like Wilfred Cantwell Smith on the grounds that such an approach provides us with an overly homogenized picture of human cultural diversity.³⁸ We can see the implications of this more clearly if we question the claim, supported by such figures as Gandhi, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Vivekānanda,

³⁷ Swāmi Vivekānanda, *Collected Works*. Vol III, p. 275 and II, p. 139.

³⁸ With regard to our current discussion Cantwell Smith states that, “The term ‘Hinduism’ is, in my judgement, a particularly false conceptualization, one that is conspicuously incompatible with any adequate understanding of the religious outlook of Hindus.” (W. Cantwell Smith [1964], *The Meaning and End of Religion*, p. 61). More recently Friedhelm Hardy (1990) has suggested, “That the global title of ‘Hinduism’ has been given to [this variety of religions] must be regarded as an act of pure despair.” (*The Religions of Asia*, Routledge, London/New York, p. 72).

that there is a single religion called “Hinduism,” which can be meaningfully referred to as the religion of the Hindu people.

The notion of “Hinduism” is itself a Western-inspired abstraction, which until the nineteenth century bore little or no resemblance to the diversity of Indian religious belief and practice. The term “Hindu” is the Persian variant of the Sanskrit *sindhu*, referring to the Indus river, and was used by the Persians to denote the people of that region.³⁹ The Arabic ‘*Al-Hind*,’ therefore, is a term denoting a particular geographical area. Although indigenous use of the term by Hindus themselves can be found as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, its usage was derivative of Persian Muslim influences and did not represent anything more than a distinction between ‘indigenous’ or ‘native’ and foreign (*mleccha*).⁴⁰ For instance, when Belgian Thierry Verhelst interviewed an Indian intellectual from Tamil Nadu he recorded the following interchange,

Q: Are you a Hindu?

A: No, I grew critical of it because of casteism... Actually, you should not ask people if they are Hindu. This does not mean much. If you ask them what their religion is, they will say, “I belong to this caste.”⁴¹

³⁹ H. von Stietencron argues that this usage of the term is attested to in Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions from the time of Darius I, who expanded his empire as far as the Indus in 517 B.C.E. H. von Stietencron (1991), in Günter D. Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke (eds.) (1991), *Hinduism Reconsidered* (Manohar Publications, New Delhi), p. 12.

⁴⁰ Romila Thapar (1989), “Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity,” in *Modern Asian Studies* 23, No. 2, p. 224 (reprinted in Thapar [1992]). See also Narendra K. Wagle (1991), “Hindu-Muslim interactions in medieval Maharashtra,” in Sontheimer and Kulke (eds.) (1991), *ibid.*, pp. 51-66, and Joseph T. O’Connell (1973), “Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava symbolism of deliverance from evil,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93, No. 3, pp. 340-343.

⁴¹ Thierry Verhelst (1985), *Cultures, Religions and Development in India: Interviews Conducted and recorded by Thierry Verhelst*, 14 to 23-1-1985. A PhD working group on Religions and Cultures, Brussels: Broederliyk Delen, Mimeo, p. 9 quoted in Balagangadha (1994), p. 16.

Indeed, it is clear that the term “Hindu,” even when used by the indigenous Indian, did not have the specifically religious connotations which it subsequently developed under Orientalist influences until the nineteenth century.⁴² Thus, eighteenth century references to “Hindoo” Christians or “Hindoo” Muslims were not uncommon.⁴³ As Romila Thapar points out in her discussion of the reception of Muslims into India, “The people of India do not seem to have perceived the new arrivals as a unified body of Muslims. The name ‘Muslim’ does not occur in the records of the early contacts. The term used was either ethnic, *turuska*, referring to the Turks, or geographical, *Yavana*, or cultural, *mleccha*.⁴⁴ One should also note the distinctively negative nature of the term, the primary function of which is to provide a catch-all designation for the “Other,” whether negatively contrasted with the ancient Persians, with their Muslim descendants, or with the later European Orientalists who eventually adopted the term. Indeed the same is apparent from an examination of modern Indian law. For example the 1955 Hindu Marriage Act, section 2 (1) defines a ‘Hindu’ as a category including not only all Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs but also anyone who is not a Muslim, a Christian, a Parsee or a Jew. Thus even in the contemporary context the terms ‘Hindu’ and ‘Hinduism’ are

⁴² Partha Chatterjee, in fact, argues that the notion of “Hindu-ness” has no specifically religious connotation to it and that “The idea that ‘Indian nationalism’ is synonymous with ‘Hindu nationalism’ is not the vestige of some premodern religious conception. It is an entirely modern, rationalist, and historicist idea. Like other modern ideologies, it allows for a central role of the state in the modernization of society and strongly defends the state’s unity and sovereignty. Its appeal is not religious but political. In this sense the framework of its reasoning is entirely secular.” See Partha Chatterjee (1992), “History and the Nationalization of Hinduism,” in *Social Research* 59, No. 1, p. 147.

⁴³ R.E. Frykenberg (1991), “The emergence of modern ‘Hinduism’ as a concept and an institution: A reappraisal with special reference to South India,” in Sontheimer and Kulke (eds.) (1991), *ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Romila Thapar (1989), *ibid.*, p. 223 (reprinted in Thapar [1992]).

essentially negative appellations, functioning as an all-inclusive rubric for the non-Judeao-Christian ‘Other’.⁴⁵

“Hindu” in fact only came into provenance amongst Westerners in the eighteenth century. Previously, the predominant Christian perspective amongst the Europeans classified Indian religion under the all-inclusive rubric of Heathenism. On this view there were four major religious groups, Jews, Christians, Mahometans (i.e. Muslims), and Heathens. Members of the last category were widely considered to be children of the Devil, and the Indian Heathens were but one particular sect alongside the Africans and the Americans (who even today are referred to as American ‘Indians’ in an attempt to draw a parallel between the indigenous populations of India and the pre-colonial population of the Americas). Other designations used to refer to the Indians were ‘Banians,’ a term which derives from the merchant populations of Northern India, and ‘Gentoos’, which functioned as an alternative to ‘Heathen.’ Nevertheless, as Western knowledge and interest in India increased, the term ‘Hindu’ eventually gained greater prominence as a culturally and geographically more specific term.

The term ‘Hinduism,’ which of course derives from the frequency with which ‘Hindu’ came to be used, is a Western explanatory construct. As such it reflects the colonial and Judeao-Christian presuppositions of the Western Orientalists who first coined the term. David Kopf praises this ‘gift’ from the Orientalists seemingly unaware of the Eurocentric agenda underlying it and the extent to which the superimposition of the monolithic entity of “Hinduism” upon Indian religious material has distorted and perhaps irretrievably transformed Indian religiosity in a westernized direction. Thus, he states that,

⁴⁵ This has lead Frits Staal, for instance to argue that “Hinduism does not merely fail to be a religion; it is not even a meaningful unit of discourse. There is no way to abstract a meaningful unitary notion of Hinduism from the Indian phenomena, unless it is done by exclusion . . .” (Frits Staal [1989], *Ritual Without Meaning*, p. 397).

The work of integrating a vast collection of myths, beliefs, rituals, and laws into a coherent religion, and of shaping an amorphous heritage into a rational faith known now as “Hinduism” were endeavors initiated by Orientalists.⁴⁶

The term “Hinduism” seems first to have made an appearance in the early nineteenth century, and gradually gained provenance in the decades thereafter. Eighteenth century references to the ‘religion of the Gentoos,’ (e.g. Nathaniel Brassey Halhead [1776], *A Code of Gentoo Laws*) were gradually supplanted in the nineteenth century by references to ‘the religion of the Hindoos,’ — a preference for the Persian as opposed to the Portuguese designation of the Indian people. However, it is not until the nineteenth century proper that the term ‘Hinduism’ became used as a signifier of a unified, all-embracing and independent religious entity in both Western and Indian circles. The Oxford English Dictionary traces “Hindooism” to an 1829 reference in the *Bengalee*, (Vol 45), and also refers to an 1858 usage by the German Indologist Max Müller.⁴⁷ Dermot Killingley, however, cites a reference to “Hindooism” by Rammohun Roy in 1816. As Killingley suggests, “Rammohun was probably the first Hindu to use the word Hinduism.”⁴⁸ One hardly need mention the extent to which Roy’s conception of the ‘Hindu’ religion was conditioned by European, Muslim and Unitarian theological influences. Ironically there is considerable reason therefore for the frequency with which Western scholars have described Roy as “the father of modern India.”

Western Orientalist discourses, by virtue of their privileged political status within ‘British’ India, have contributed greatly to the modern construction of “Hinduism” as a single world religion. This was some-

⁴⁶ David Kopf (1980), *ibid.*, p. 502.

⁴⁷ See Max Müller (1880), *Chips from a German Workshop* II, xxvii, 304. See Frykenberg (1991), *ibid.*, p. 43, note 7. Clearly the term is in provenance by this time since we find Charles Neumann using the term ‘Hindooism’ in his 1831 work *The Catechism of the Shamans* whilst explaining the sense in which Buddhism is to be understood as “a reform of the old Hindoo orthodox Church” (p. xxvi).

⁴⁸ Dermot Killingley (1993), *Rammohun Roy in Hindu and Christian Tradition, The Teape Lectures 1990*, (Grevatt and Grevatt, Newcastle-upon-Tyne), p. 60.

what inevitable given British control over the political, educational and media institutions of India. If we note, for instance, the extent to which the British established an education system which promoted the study of European literature, history and science, and the study of Indian culture through the medium of English or vernacular translations of the work of Western Orientalists, if we also acknowledge the fact that all of India's universities were established by the British, and according to British educational criteria, we can see the extent to which Macauley's hope of an élite class of Anglicized Indians was put into practice.

Christianity, Textualism and the Construction of "Hinduism"

European colonial influence upon Indian religion and culture has profoundly altered its nature in the modern era. In particular I would like to highlight two ways in which Western colonization has contributed to the modern construction of "Hinduism" — firstly by locating the core of Indian religiosity in certain Sanskrit texts (the textualization of Indian religion) and secondly by an implicit (and sometimes explicit) tendency to define Indian religion in terms of a normative definition of religion based upon contemporary Western understanding of the Judaeo-Christian traditions. These two processes are clearly interwoven in a highly complex fashion and one might even wish to argue that they are in fact merely two aspects of a single phenomenon — namely the westernization of Indian religion. Nevertheless, they require some attention if we are to grasp the sense in which the modern conception of Hinduism is indeed a *modern* development!

Western literary bias has contributed to a textualization of Indian religion.⁴⁹ This is not to deny that Indian culture has its own literary traditions, rather it is to emphasize the sense in which Western presuppositions about the role of sacred texts in 'religion' predisposed Orientalists towards focusing upon such texts as the essential foundation for

⁴⁹ In fact one could argue that in focusing one's critical attention upon Orientalist texts, the textualist paradigm which underlies them remains largely unchallenged. See for instance, Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), p. 5, where this point is made in passing but never properly addressed.

understanding the Hindu people as a whole. Protestant emphasis upon the text as the locus of religion, therefore, placed a particular emphasis upon the literary aspects of Indian culture in the work of Orientalists. Academics and highly educated Western administrators are already inclined towards literary forms of expression because of their training and so it is not that surprising to find Orientalists (both old and new) being drawn towards Indian literary materials as key sources for understanding Indian culture. Many of the early European translators of Indian texts were also Christian missionaries, who, in their translations and critical editions of Indian works, effectively constructed uniform texts and a homogenized written canon through the imposition of Western philological standards and presuppositions onto Indian materials.⁵⁰ Thus, the oral and 'popular' aspects of Indian religious tradition were either ignored or decried as evidence of the degradation of contemporary Hindu religion into superstitious practices on the grounds that they bear little or no resemblance to "their own" texts. This attitude was easily assimilated with the pūrānically inspired, brahmanical belief in the current deterioration of civilization in the age of *kaliyuga*.

The textualist bias of Western Orientalists has had far reaching consequences in the increasingly literate India of the modern era. As Rosalind O'Hanlon (1989) writes

the privileging of scribal communities and authoritative interpreters of 'tradition' provided, on the one hand, an essential requirement of practical administration.

⁵⁰ Frykenberg even goes as far as to suggest that Christian missionary activity was probably the largest single factor in the development of a 'corporate' and 'revivalist' Hinduism in India. See Frykenberg (1991), *ibid.*, p. 39. See also Vinay Dharwadker (1993), "Orientalism and the Study of Indian Literatures," in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, pp. 158-185 for an insightful discussion of the ways in which the various forms of "Indian literature" were studied according to the European literary standards of the time. Dharwadker also discusses the nature of nineteenth century European philology and its presuppositions (e.g., pp. 175; 181). Dharwadker also draws attention to the Sanskritic bias of the Western Orientalists. See also Rosane Rocher (1993), "British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century," in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, pp. 220-225 (especially p. 221), and Peter van der Veer (1993), in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, p. 40.

On the other, it formed a crucial component in colonialism's larger project itself for the textualization of cultures, for the construction of authoritative bodies of knowledge about Hindu communities as the means of securing 'freedom' to follow their own customs.⁵¹

William Jones for example, in his role as Supreme Court Judge in India, initiated a project to translate the *Dharmaśāstras* in the misguided belief that this represented the law of the Hindus, in order to circumvent what he saw as the 'culpable bias' of the native pandits. In taking the *Dharmaśāstras* as a binding law-book, Jones manifests the Judeao-Christian paradigm within which he conceived of religion, and the attempt to apply such a book universally reflects Jones' 'textual imperialism'.⁵² The problem with taking the *Dharmaśāstras* as pan-Indian in application is that the texts themselves were representative of a priestly élite (the *brāhmaṇa* castes), and not of Hindus *in toto*. Thus, even within these texts, there was no notion of a unified, Hindu community, but rather an acknowledgement of a plurality of local, occupational and caste contexts in which different customs or rules applied.⁵³ It was thus in this manner that

society was made to conform to ancient *dharmaśāstra* texts, in spite of those texts' insistence that they were overridden by local and group custom. It eventually allowed Anglicist administrators to *manipulate the porous boundary between religion as defined by texts and customs they wished to ban*.⁵⁴ (my italics)

There is, of course, a danger that in critically focusing upon Orientalist discourses one might ignore the importance of native actors and circumstances in the construction of Western conceptions of India. Here perhaps we should note the sense in which certain élitist com-

⁵¹ Rosalind O'Hanlon (1989), *ibid.*, p. 105.

⁵² See Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵³ See Romila Thapar (1989), *ibid.*, pp. 220-221 (reprinted in Thapar [1992]). See also S. N. Balagangadhara (1994), *The Heathen in His Blindness: Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion* (E.J. Brill, Leiden), pp. 16-17 and chapters 3 and 4 in general.

⁵⁴ Rosane Rocher (1993), in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, p. 242.

munities within India (notably the scholarly *brāhmaṇa* castes), exerted a certain degree of influence upon the Western Orientalists, thereby contributing to the construction of the modern, Western conception of "Hinduism". The high social, economic and, to some degree, political status of the *brāhmaṇa* castes has, no doubt, contributed to the elision between Brahmanical forms of religion and "Hinduism." This is most notable for instance in the tendency to emphasize Vedic and Brahmanical texts and beliefs as central and foundational to the "essence" of Hindu religiosity in general, and in the modern association of 'Hindu doctrine' with the various Brahmanical schools of the Vedānta (in particular Advaita Vedānta). Indeed, Neo-Vedāntic rhetoric about the underlying unity of Indian religion has tended

to support the Westerners' preconceived notion that it was one religion they were dealing with. Since they were used to the Christian tradition of an absolute claim for only one truth, of a powerful church dominating society, and consequently of fierce religious and social confrontation with members of other creeds, they were unable even to conceive of such religious liberality as would give members of the same society the freedom, by individual choice, to practice the religion they liked.

As a result, Western students saw Hinduism as a unity. The Indians had no reason to contradict this; to them the religious and cultural unity discovered by Western scholars was highly welcome in their search for national identity in the period of struggle for national union.⁵⁵

C.A. Bayly notes, for instance, the extent to which the administrative and academic demand for the literary and ritual expertise of the Brahmins placed them in a position of direct contact and involvement with their imperial rulers; a factor that should not go unnoticed in attempting to explain why Western Orientalists tended to associate Brahmanical literature and ideology with Hindu religion *in toto*.⁵⁶ It is clear that, in this regard at least, Western Orientalists, working under the aegis of a Judeao-Christian religious paradigm, looked for and found

⁵⁵ H. von Stietencron (1991), in Sontheimer and Kulke (eds.) (1991), *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁶ C.A. Bayly (1988), *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), pp. 155-158.

an ecclesiastical authority akin to Western models of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. In the case of the Brahmanical 'priests' and pandits, already convinced of the degradation of contemporary Indian civilization in the present era of *kaliyuga*, these scholars generally found a receptive and willing religious élite, who, for that very reason remained amenable to the rhetoric of reform.

The Brahmanical religions, of course, had already been active in their own appropriation of non-Brahmanical forms of Indian religion long before the Muslim and European invasions. Brahminization, viz., the process whereby the Sanskritic, 'high' culture of the brahmins, absorbed non-Brahmanical (sometimes called 'popular,' or even 'tribal') religious forms, was an effective means of assimilating diverse cultural strands within one's locality, and of maintaining social and political authority.⁵⁷ The process works both ways, of course, and many of the features of Sanskritic religion initially derived from a particular, localized context.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, in the case of the educated *brāhmaṇa* castes, the British found a loosely defined cultural élite that proved

⁵⁷ Brahminization, or the general process whereby non-Brahmanical forms of Indian religion are colonized and transformed by hegemonic Brahmanical discourses, can be distinguished from the more general process of Sanskritization. The confutation of the two stems from a mistaken association of Sanskritic culture exclusively with the *brāhmaṇa* castes. As Milton Singer has suggested Sanskritization may follow the *ksatriya*, *vaiśya* or even the *sūdra* models (Milton Singer (1964), "The Social Organization of Indian Civilization," in *Diogenes* 45, pp. 84-119.) Srinivas, in his later reflections upon Sanskritization, also points to the Sanādh Brahmins of Western Uttar Pradesh as evidence that the culture of the Brahmins is not always highly Sanskritic in nature. (See Srinivas [1968], *Social Change in Modern India* [University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London], p. 20. Whilst Brahminization in the widest sense, then, cannot be universally equated with Sanskritization, throughout this work I shall use the term 'Brahminization' as a short-hand term for Sanskritic Brahminization, that is to denote a particular species of Sanskritization.

⁵⁸ The ideological constructs and colonial nature of Brahmanical discourses, as represented in distinctions between *vaidik* (i.e. derived from the Vedas), *shastrik* (derived from the *śāstras*), and *laukik* (worldly) forms of knowledge clearly demonstrates the sense in which the imperialist thrust of Orientalism is not an isolated historical or even an exclusively Western phenomenon. For a discussion of this see Sheldon Pol-

amenable to an ideology which placed them at the apex of a single world religious tradition.⁵⁹ If one asks who would most have benefited from the modern construction of a unified Hindu community focusing upon the Sanskritic and Brahmanical forms of Indian religion, the answer would, of course, be those highly educated members of the higher *brāhmaṇa* castes, for whom modern 'Hinduism' represents the triumph of universalized, Brahmanical forms of religion over the 'tribal' and the 'local'. Statistically, for example, it would seem that in post-Independence India the brahmin castes have become the dominant social group, filling 36 to 63% of all government jobs, despite representing only 3.5% of the Indian population.⁶⁰ As Frykenberg points out,

Brahmins have always controlled information. That was their boast. It was they who had provided information on indigenous institutions [for Western orientalists]. It was they who provided this on a scale so unprecedented that,

lock (1993), in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, pp. 78; 96f; 107; 117, note 1.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of this in relation to the politics of translation see Richard Burghart (1991), "Something Lost, Something gained: Translations of Hinduism," in Sontheimer and Kulke (eds.) (1991), *ibid.*, pp. 213-225. See also Peter van der Veer (1993), in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, p. 23, 26-27, 40; Bernard Cohn (1968), "Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture," in Milton Singer and Bernard Cohn (eds.) (1968), *Structure and Change in Indian Society* (Aldine, Chicago), pp. 3-28; Jonathan Parry (1985) "The Brahmanical Tradition and the Technology of the Intellect," in Joanna Overing (ed.) (1985), *Reason and Morality* (Tavistock Publications, London), pp. 200-225. Talal Asad (1993), provides a cogent discussion of the political implications of linguistic and cultural translation in the light of inequalities of power between the contexts of the translator and the translated (pp. 189-199). Thus, Asad notes that, "To put it crudely, because the languages of third world societies, . . . are seen as weaker in relation to Western languages (and today, especially to English), they are more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around" (p. 190).

⁶⁰ See Khushwant Singh in *Sunday*: 23-29 December 1990, p. 19, quoted in Gerald Larson (1993), "Discourse About 'Religion' in Colonial and Postcolonial India," from Ninian Smart and Shivesh Thakur (eds.) (1993), *Ethical and Political Dilemmas of Modern India* (St. Martin's Press), pp. 189-190.

at least at the level of All-India consciousness, a new religion emerged the likes of which India had perhaps never known before.⁶¹

The Sanskritic “Brahmanization” of Hindu religion (itself representing one stage in the textualization process), was filtered through colonial discourses, thereby furnishing a new holistic and unified conception of the multiplicity of Indian religious phenomena throughout history. Such an approach remains profoundly anti-historical in its postulation of an ahistorical “essence” to which all forms of “Hinduism” are said to relate. As Said has suggested, such an abstract and synchronic approach is one way in which Orientalist discourses fundamentally distinguish the passive and ahistorical Orient from the active and historically changing Occident. In this manner, Orientals are effectively dehumanized (since denied an active role in the processes of history), and thus, made more amenable to colonial manipulation. As Romila Thapar suggests, this new Hinduism, furnished with a brahmanical base, was merged with elements of “upper caste belief and ritual with one eye on the Christian and Islamic models,” this was thoroughly infused with a political and nationalistic emphasis. Thapar describes this contemporary development as “Syndicated Hinduism,” and notes that it is “being pushed forward as the sole claimant of the inheritance of indigenous Indian religion.”⁶²

This reflects the tendency, during and after European colonialism, for Indian religion to be conceived by Westerners and Indians themselves in a manner conducive to Judaeo-Christian conceptions of the nature of religion; a process which Veena Das has described as the ‘semitification’ of Hinduism in the modern era. Thus, since the nine-

⁶¹ Frykenberg (1991), *ibid.*, p. 34. For discussions of the active part which native Indians played in the construction of Orientalist discourses see Nicholas B. Dirks (1993), “Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive” and David Lelyveld (1993), “The Fate of Hindustani: Colonial Knowledge and the Project of a National Language,” both in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, pp. 279-313 and 189-214.

⁶² Romila Thapar (1985), “Syndicated Moksha,” in *Seminar* 313 (September), p. 21.

teenth century “Hinduism” has developed, and is notable for, a number of new characteristics, which seem to have arisen in response to Judaeo-Christian presuppositions about the nature of religion. This new form of organized or, “Syndicated Hinduism”

seeks historicity for the incarnations of its deities, encourages the idea of a centrally sacred book, claims monotheism as significant to the worship of deity, acknowledges the authority of the ecclesiastical organization of certain sects as prevailing over all and has supported large-scale missionary work and conversion. These changes allow it to transcend caste identities and reach out to larger numbers.⁶³

In the contemporary era, then, “Hinduism” is characterized by both an emerging “universalistic” strand which focuses upon proselytization (e.g. Neo-Vedānta, Sathya Sai Baba, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Transcendental Meditation, etc.) as well as so-called “fundamentalist,” “revivalist” and “nationalist” strands that focus upon the historicity of human incarnations of Viṣṇu, such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the sacrality of their purported birthplaces, and an antagonistic attitude towards non-Hindu religions (notably the Indian Muslims).⁶⁴ One hardly need point to the sense in which these developments mimic traits usually associated in the West with the Judaeo-Christian traditions.⁶⁵

Indeed, it would seem that the key to the West’s initial postulation of the unity of “Hinduism” derives from the Judaeo-Christian presuppositions of the Orientalists and missionaries. Convinced as they were that distinctive religions could not coexist without frequent antagonism, the doctrinal liberality of Indian religions remained a mystery without the postulation of an overarching religious framework which could unite the Indians under the flag of a single religious tradition.

⁶³ Romila Thapar (1989), *ibid.*, p. 228.

⁶⁴ See Daniel Gold (1991), “Organized Hinduism: From Vedic Truth to Hindu Nation,” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.) (1991), *Fundamentalisms Observed* (University of Chicago Press), pp. 531-593, for an outline of contemporary “fundamentalist” and “nationalist” trends in India.

⁶⁵ See Hans Bakker (1991), “Ayodhyā: A Hindu Jerusalem. An Investigation of ‘Holy War’ as a Religious Idea in the Light of Communal Unrest in India,” in *Numen* XXXVIII, No. 1, pp. 80-109.

How else can the relatively peaceful co-existence of the various Hindu movements be explained without some sense of religious unity? Why else would Hindus of differing sectarian affiliations accept the existence of rival gods unless they belonged to the same religious tradition? Failure to transcend a model of religion premised on the monotheistic exclusivism of Western Christianity thereby resulted in the imaginative construction of a single religion called “Hinduism”. Of course, being able to classify Hindus under a single religious rubric also made colonial control and manipulation easier. The fact that the semblance of unity within India owed considerable debt to imperial rule seems to have been forgotten. The lack of an orthodoxy, of an ecclesiastical structure, or indeed of any distinctive feature which might point to the postulation of a single Hindu religion, was dismissed, and one consequence of this was the tendency to portray ‘Hinduism’ as a contradictory religion, which required some form of organization along ecclesiastical and doctrinal lines, and a purging of ‘superstitious’ elements incompatible with the ‘high’ culture of ‘Hinduism’.

This new *epistēme*⁶⁶ created a conceptual space in the form of a rising perception that “Hinduism” had become a corrupt shadow of its former self (which was now located in certain key sacred texts such as the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā — all taken to provide an unproblematic account of ancient Hindu religiosity). The perceived shortcomings of contemporary ‘Hinduism’ in comparison to the ideal form, as represented in the text, thus created the belief (amongst both Westerners and Indians) that Hindu religion had stagnated over the centuries and was therefore in need of reformation. The gap between original (ideal) ‘Hinduism’ and the contemporary beliefs and practices of Hindus was soon filled of course by the rise of what have become known as ‘Hindu reform movements’ in the nineteenth century — groups such as the Brahmo Samaj, the Ārya Samaj and the Ra-

⁶⁶ I am using *epistēme* here in a broadly Foucaultian sense to denote that which “defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in practice” (Foucault [1973], *The Order of Things* (Pantheon, New York), p. 168.

makrishna Mission. Virtually all textbooks on Hinduism describe these groups as 'reform' movements. This representation, however, falls into the trap of seeing pre-colonial Hindu religion(s) through colonial spectacles. When combined with a highly questionable periodization of Hindu religious history (which ultimately derives from James Mill's *A History of British India*) the impression is given (i). that Hinduism is a single religion with its origins in the Vedas, (ii). that from the 'medieval' period onwards (c. 10th century onwards) Hinduism stagnated and lost its potential for renewal, and (iii). that with the arrival of the West, Hindus became inspired to reform their now decadent religion to something approaching its former glory. This picture of Indian history, as problematic as it is prevalent, reflects a Victorian and post-Enlightenment faith in the progressive nature of history. Thus, Hinduism in the twentieth century is allowed to enter the privileged arena of the 'world religions,' finally coming of age in a global context and satisfying the criteria of membership established by Western scholars of religion!

To illustrate the arbitrariness involved in the homogenization of Indian religions under the rubric of "Hinduism," let us briefly consider what happens if one applies the same *a priori* assumption of religious unity to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As von Stietencron argues, if one takes these three 'religions' to be sects or denominations of a single religion one can point to a common geographical origin in the Near East, a common ancestry (Abrahamic tradition), a common monotheism, a common prophetism, all three accept a linear and eschatological conception of history, uphold similar (though varying) religious ethics, work within a broadly similar theological framework with regard to their notions of a single God, the devil, paradise, creation, the status of humankind within the workings of history, as well as, of course, revering the Hebrew Bible (to varying degrees). On the other hand, however, there is no common founder of the three movements, probably no doctrine which is valid for all adherents, no uniform religious ritual or ecclesiastical organization, and it is not immediately clear that the adherents of these three movements

believe in the same God.⁶⁷ If we then consider the diversity of religious movements usually subsumed under the label “Hinduism” we will find a similar picture. Perhaps the difference lies in the fact that nineteenth and twentieth century “Hindus” have generally not objected to the postulation of a single religious tradition as a way of understanding their beliefs and practices, whereas Jews, Christians and Muslims generally remain very protective of their own group identities. This Hindu attitude does not merely reflect the colonization of their thought-processes by the Orientalists. Postulation of Hindu unity was to be encouraged in the development of Indian autonomy from British rule. *Swaraj* (home rule) was seen to be inconceivable without the unification of India along nationalistic and cultural lines. Not only that, although sectarian clashes have always occurred, in general Indian religious groups appear to have been able to live together in a manner unprecedented in the history of the Judaeo-Christian religions in the West.

Consequently, it remains an anachronism to project the notion of “Hinduism” as it is commonly understood into pre-colonial Indian history. Before the unification begun under imperial rule and consolidated by the Independence of 1947 it makes no sense to talk of an Indian ‘nation,’ nor of a religion called “Hinduism” which might be taken to represent the belief system of the Hindu people. Today of course the situation differs insofar as one can now point to a loosely defined cultural entity which might be labelled “Hinduism”, or, as some prefer, “Neo-Hinduism” (though this latter term implies that there was a unified cultural entity known as “Hinduism” which can be pinpointed in the pre-colonial era). The presuppositions of the Orientalists cannot be underestimated in the process whereby nineteenth and twentieth century Indians have come to perceive their own identity and culture through colonially crafted lenses. It is clear, then, that from the nineteenth century onwards Indian self-awareness has resulted in the development of an intellectual and textually-based “Hinduism” which is

⁶⁷ H. von Stietencron (1991), *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

then 'read back' (if you pardon the 'textual' pun) into India's religious history. Indeed,

The construction of a unified Hindu identity is of utmost importance for Hindus who live outside India. They need a Hinduism that can be explained to outsiders as a respectable religion, that can be taught to their children in religious education, and that can form the basis for collective action. . . . In an ironic twist of history, orientalism is now brought by Indians to Indians living in the West.⁶⁸

As mentioned earlier, the invention of "Hinduism" as a single "world" religion was also accompanied by the rise of a nationalist consciousness in India since the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ The modern nation-state, of course, is a product of European socio-political and economic developments from the sixteenth century onwards, and the introduction of the nationalist model into Asia is a further legacy of European imperialism in this area. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, to find that the very Hindu nationalists who fought so vehemently against British imperialist rule, themselves accepted the homogenizing concepts of 'nationhood' and 'Hinduism,' which ultimately derived from their imperial rulers.⁷⁰ It is difficult to see what alternative the

⁶⁸ Peter van der Veer (1993) in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁹ See Partha Chatterjee (1992), "History and the Nationalization of Hinduism," in *Social Research* 59, No.1, pp. 111-149 and Chatterjee (1986), *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse* (Zed Books Ltd, London); Mark Juergensmeyer (1993), *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London). Of relevance here also is the work of David Lelyveld ("The Fate of Hindustani: Colonial Knowledge and the Project of a National Language," in Breckenridge and van der Veer [eds.] [1993], *ibid.*, pp. 189-214) on the role which Hindustani and Hindi played in the failed colonial project of constructing a national language in India. See also Arjun Appadurai's discussion of the way in which the quantification process initiated by gathering of statistical information for the Census etc., functions as a means of constructing homogeneity — ("Number in the Colonial Imagination," in Breckenridge and van der Veer [eds.] [1993], *ibid.*, especially pp. 330-334).

⁷⁰ For a comprehensive discussion of the colonial roots of Indian nationalist consciousness, see Partha Chatterjee (1986), *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World — A Derivative Discourse?* (Zed Books Ltd., London). See also Chatterjee

anti-colonialists had, since the nation-state provides the paradigmatic building block of all contemporary economic, political and cultural interaction. Thus, as David Luddens has suggested, the authority of Orientalist discourses initially derived from colonialism,

... but it was reproduced by anti-imperial, national movements and reinvigorated by Partition, in 1947, and the reorganization of Indian states, in 1956; it thrives today on conflict expressed in religious and ethnic terms. In its reification of tradition and of oppositions between East and West, nationalized orientalism suffuses postcolonial political culture and scholarship that claims to speak for India by defining India's identity in a postcolonial world.... Having helped to make nations in South Asia what they are, orientalism fuels fires that may consume them.⁷¹

(1992), "History and the Nationalization of Hinduism," in *Social Research* 59, No. 1, pp. 111-149.

⁷¹ David Ludden (1993) "Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge," in Breckenridge and van der Veer (1993), *ibid.*, p. 274. In relation to this a number of commentators have suggested that the problems associated with "communalism" are legacies of British imperial rule. Thus, Aditya Mukherjee argues that "Indian society was *not* split since 'time immemorial' into religious communal categories. Nor is it so divided today in areas where communal ideology has not yet penetrated.... However, communalism as it is understood today, ... is a *modern phenomenon*, which took root half way through the British colonial presence in India — in the second half of the nineteenth century." See A. Mukherjee (1990), "Colonialism and Communalism," in Sarvepalli Gopal (ed.) (1990), *Anatomy of a Confrontation. The Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi Issue* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex), p. 165. See also Romila Thapar (1989), *ibid.*, p. 209, and Gyanendra Pandey (1990), *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Oxford University Press). See also Arjun Appadurai (1993), "Number in the Colonial Imagination," in Breckenridge and van der Veer (eds.) (1993), *ibid.*, pp. 314-340; Ludden (1993), *ibid.*, pp. 266-267; van der Veer (1993), *ibid.*, p. 39; Sheldon Pollock (1993), *ibid.*, p. 107; 123, note 42. From a Western secular perspective 'the problem of communalism' is understood as evidence of the existence of old religious allegiances which are in conflict with the secular perspective of modern nationalism. However, for a critique of the hegemony of the secular nationalist model of the West see Mark Juergensmeyer (1993), *ibid.*

Romila Thapar consolidates this position by pointing to the political consequences of the construction of a common Hindu identity. Thus, she argues that,

Since it was easy to recognize other communities on the basis of religion, such as Muslims and Christians, an effort was made to consolidate a parallel Hindu community. . . . In Gramsci's terms, the class which wishes to become hegemonic has to nationalize itself and the 'nationalist' Hinduism comes from the middle class.⁷²

The Status of the Term "Hinduism"

Given the evidence which we have just considered is it still possible to use the term "Hinduism" at all? One might wish to argue that the term "Hinduism" is a useful construct insofar as it refers to the general features of "Indian culture" rather than to a single religion. Julius Lipner has recently argued that scholars should retain the term "Hinduism" insofar as it is used in a non-essentialist manner to refer to Hindu culture and not to the idea of a single religion. Lipner suggests that the Western term 'Hinduism' when used in this sense is effective so long as it represents the 'dynamic polycentrism' of *Hindutā* (Hindu-ness).⁷³

However, even Lipner's characterization of 'Hinduism' remains deeply indebted to Sanskritic Brahmanism. It is difficult to see, even on this view, why Buddhism and Jainism are not themselves part of *Hindutā*. Despite Lipner's explicit disavowal of an essentialist or rei-

⁷² Romila Thapar (1989), *ibid.*, p. 230. Daniel Gold suggests that "Postcolonial Hindu fundamentalism can thus appear as a new colonialism of the victors. In representing an emergence of Indic group consciousness in new forms shaped by the colonial experience, it can easily lead to a tyranny of the majority. For it keeps the Western idea of religious community as an ideally homogenous group, but abandons the ideas of equality among communities and protections for minorities introduced with secular British administration. . ." (Gold [1991], *ibid.*, p. 580.)

⁷³ Julius J. Lipner (1996), "Ancient Banyan: An Inquiry into the Meaning of 'Hinduism'" in *Religious Studies* 32, pp. 109-126. Lipner's use of '*Hindutā*' reflects his explicit avoidance of the term '*Hindutva*' which has been appropriated in the political arena by Hindu nationalists (see pp. 112-113).

fied rendering of the term, his description of ‘Hinduism’ as “macrocosmically one though microcosmically many, a polycentric phenomenon imbued with the same life-sap, the boundaries and (micro)centres seeming to merge and overlap in a complexus of oscillating tensions,”⁷⁴ is likely to continue to cause misunderstanding, just as it is also likely to be appropriated by the inclusivism of Neo-Vedānta (which attempts to subsume Buddhism [in particular] under the umbrella of an absolutism of the Advaita Vedānta variety) and Hindu nationalist groups alike. Although the modern Indian Constitution [article 25 (2)] classifies all Buddhist, Jains and Sikhs as ‘Hindu,’ this is unacceptable for a number of reasons. Firstly, because it rides roughshod over religious diversity and established group-affiliations. Secondly, such an approach ignores the non-Brahmanical and non-Vedic elements of these traditions. Fundamentally, such assimilation effectively subverts the authority of members of these traditions to speak for themselves. In the last analysis, Neo-Vedāntic inclusivism remains inappropriate for the simple reason that Buddhists and Jains do not generally see themselves as followers of sectarian denominations of “Hinduism.”

Lipner’s appeal to ‘polycentricism’ and perspectivism as characteristic of Hindu thought also fails to salvage a recognizable sense of Indian *religious* unity since it amounts to stating that the unity of “Hinduism” (or *Hindutā*) can be found in a relativistic recognition of perspective in a great deal of Hindu doctrine and practice. This will hardly suffice if one wishes to use the term “Hinduism” in a way which is in any meaningful respect classifiable as a ‘religion’ in the modern Western sense of the term. One might wish to postulate “Hinduism” as an underlying *cultural* unity but this too is likely to prove inadequate once one moves beyond generalized examination and appeals to cultural homogeneity. Yet even if one accepts “Hinduism” as a cultural rather than as a specifically religious unity, one would then need to acknowledge the sense in which it was no longer identifiable as an “ism,” thereby rendering the term obsolete or at best downright misleading. To continue to talk of “Hinduism” even as a broad cultural phenomenon is

⁷⁴ J. Lipner (1996), *ibid.*, p. 110.

as problematic as the postulation of a unified cultural tradition known as "Westernism." There are general features of both Indian and Western culture which one can pinpoint and analyse to a certain degree, but neither term should be reified.

Indologist Wilhelm Halbfass has attacked the claim that "Hinduism" is an Orientalist construction by appealing to the universality of the concept of *Dharma* in pre-modern Hindu thought.

We cannot reduce the meanings of *dharma* to one general principle; nor is there one single translation that would cover all its usages. Nevertheless, there is coherence in this variety; it reflects the elusive, yet undeniable coherence of Hinduism itself, its peculiar unity-in-diversity.⁷⁵

According to Halbfass, despite specific "sectarian" allegiances (e.g. to Vaiṣṇavism or Śaivism) the theoreticians and literary representatives of these traditions "relate and refer to one another, juxtapose or coordinate their teachings, and articulate their claims of mutual inclusion or transcendence" in a manner indicative of a wider sense of Hindu unity and identity.⁷⁶ However, the 'elusive' glue which apparently holds together the diversity of Indian religious traditions is not further elaborated upon by Halbfass, nor is this 'unity-in-diversity' as 'undeniable' as he suggests. As we have seen, the nineteenth century Orientalists tended to postulate an underlying unity to Hindu religious traditions because they tended to view Indian religion from a Western Christian perspective. Halbfass at least is willing to admit that the reality of "Hinduism" is "elusive" and that the use of the term 'religion' to translate the concept of *Dharma* is problematic.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, in my view he fails to appreciate the sense in which the postulation of a single, underlying *religious* unity called "Hinduism" requires a highly imaginative act of historical reconstruction. To appeal to the Indian concept of *Dharma* as unifying the diversity of Hindu religious traditions is

⁷⁵ Wilhelm Halbfass (1988), *India and Europe*, p. 333.

⁷⁶ Wilhelm Halbfass, "The Veda and the Identity of Hinduism," in Halbfass (1991), *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought* (State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y.), p. 15.

⁷⁷ See Halbfass (1988), *India and Europe*, ch. 18.

moot since *Dharma* is not a principle which is amenable to a single, universal interpretation, being in fact appropriated in diverse ways by a variety of Indian traditions (all of whom tended to define the concept in terms of their own group-dynamic and identity). The appeal to *Dharma* therefore is highly questionable in the same sense that an appeal to the notion of the Covenant would be in establishing that Judaism, Christianity and Islam were actually sectarian offshoots of a single religious tradition.

Despite all of these problems, one might argue that there are a number of reasons why one should retain the term "Hinduism." Firstly, the term remains useful on a general, superficial and introductory level. Secondly, it is clear that since the nineteenth century, movements have arisen in India which roughly correspond to the term as it has been understood by Orientalists. Indeed, as I have argued, Orientalist accounts have themselves had a significant role to play in the rise of such groups. Thus, "Hinduism" now exists in a sense in which it certainly did not before the nineteenth century! Thirdly, one might wish to retain the term, as Lipner does, with the qualification that its radically polythetic nature be understood. Such an approach would need to be thoroughly non-essentialist in approach and draw particular attention to the ruptures and discontinuities, the criss-crossing patterns and 'family resemblances' which are usually subsumed by unreflective and essentialist usage of the term. Ferro-Luzzi, for instance, has suggested that the term "Hinduism" should be understood to be a 'polythetic-prototypical' concept, polythetic because of its radically heterogenous nature, and 'prototypical' in the sense that the term is frequently used by both Westerners and Indians to refer to a particular idealized construct. Prototypical features of Hinduism function as such either because of their high frequency amongst Hindus (e.g. the worship of deities such Śiva, Kṛṣṇa and Ganeṣa, temple worship, the practice of *pūja* etc.), or because of their prestige amongst Hindus (e.g. the so-called 'high' culture of Hindus, i.e., the Brahmanical concepts of *dharma*, *saṃsara*, *karman*, *advaita*, *viśistādvaita* etc.), which remain important normative or prototypical paradigms for contemporary

Hindu self-identity, although only actually believed in by a minority. With regard to this latter category, Ferro-Luzzi suggests that,

Even though only a minority of Hindus believe in them or even knows them they enjoy the greatest prestige both among educated Hindus and Westerners. Besides, their influence upon Hindus tends to increase now with the spread of education [and literacy one might add]. The prototype of a Hindu might be a person who worships the above deities, visits temples, goes on a pilgrimage and believes in the above concepts. Undoubtedly, such persons exist but they are only a minority amongst Hindus.⁷⁸

In my view, however, the problems deriving from the use of "Hinduism" make it inappropriate as a term denoting the heterogeneity of 'Hindu' religiosity in the pre-colonial era. Nevertheless, whatever one's view on the appropriateness of the term "Hinduism," the abandonment of essentialism, rather than facilitating vagueness and disorder, opens up the possibility of new directions in the study of South Asian religion and culture. Indeed, a proper acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of Indian religiosity, as provided by a postcolonial critique of homogenizing and hegemonic discourses (whether Western or Indian), also allows for the possibility of subaltern responses to dominant ideological constructs and the cultural and political elitism that they tend to support.

Conclusions

As scholars such as Said and Ronald Inden have argued, the study of Asian cultures in the West has generally been characterized by an essentialism which posits the existence of distinct properties, qualities or 'natures' which differentiate "Indian" culture from the West. Western scholars have also tended to presuppose that such analysis was an accurate and unproblematic representation of that which it purported to explain, and that as educated Westerners they were better placed than Indians themselves to understand, classify and describe Indian culture.

⁷⁸ G. Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi (1991), "The Polythetic-Prototype Approach to Hinduism," in Sontheimer and Kulke (eds.) (1991), *ibid.*, p. 192.

Simplistically speaking, we can speak of two forms of Orientalist discourse, the first, generally antagonistic and confident in European superiority, the second, generally affirmative, enthusiastic and suggestive of Indian superiority in certain key areas. Both forms of Orientalism, however, make essentialist judgements which foster an overly simplistic and homogenous conception of Indian culture. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that Orientalist discourses are not univocal, nor can they be simplistically dismissed as mere tools of European imperialist ideology. Thus, the 'new' Indian intelligentsia, educated in colonially established institutions, and according to European cultural standards, appropriated the romanticist elements in Orientalist dialogues and promoted the idea of a spiritually advanced and ancient religious tradition called "Hinduism," which was the religion of the Indian 'nation'. In this manner, Western-inspired Orientalist and nationalist discourses permeated indigenous self-awareness and were applied in anti-colonial discourses by Indians themselves. However, such indigenous discourses remain deeply indebted to Orientalist presuppositions and have generally failed to criticize the essentialist stereotypes embodied in such narratives. This rejection of British political hegemony, but from a standpoint which still accepts many of the European presuppositions about Indian culture, is what Ashis Nandy has called 'the second colonization' of India.

In this regard, the nature of Indian postcolonial self-identity provides some support for Gadamer's suggestion that one cannot easily escape the normative authority of tradition, for, in opposing British colonial rule, Hindu nationalists did not fully transcend the presuppositions of the West, but rather legitimated Western Orientalist discourse by responding in a manner which did not fundamentally question the Orientalists' paradigm!

Through the colonially established apparatus of the political, economic and educational institutions of India, contemporary Indian self-awareness remains deeply influenced by Western presuppositions about the nature of India culture. The prime example of this being the development since the nineteenth century of an indigenous sense of Indian national identity and the construction of a single "world" re-

ligion called "Hinduism." This religion is now the cognitive site of a power struggle between internationally-oriented movements (such as ISKCON and the Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission) and contemporary Hindu nationalist movements (such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh). The prize on offer is to be able to define the 'soul' or 'essence' of Hinduism. My thesis has been that this 'essence' did not exist (at least in the sense in which Western Orientalists and contemporary Hindu movements have tended to represent it) until it was invented in the nineteenth century. Insofar as such conceptions of Indian culture and history prevail and the myth of 'Hinduism' persists, contemporary Indian identities remain subject to the influence of a westernizing and neo-colonial (as opposed to truly postcolonial) orientalism.⁷⁹

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⁷⁹ This paper is part of a larger project examining the interface between post-colonial theory and the study of religion. See Richard King (1999), *Orientalism and Religion. Post-colonial Theory, India and "the Mystic East"* (Routledge, London and New York).

A TALE OF TWO TIMES: PREACHING IN THE LATTER AGE OF THE DHARMA¹

JAMIE HUBBARD

Summary

Sharing a cyclical cosmogony with other Indian worldviews, Buddhism is ordinarily thought to be unconcerned with specific historical events, looking instead towards the individual transcendence of temporal becoming as the goal of religious practice. One counterpoint to this prevailing attitude is the tradition of the decline of the dharma, premised upon the historical uniqueness or specificity of Śākyamuni's teachings and an attendant eschatological consciousness of temporal distance from the time of the teacher and his teachings. Interestingly, the *Lotus Sutra* presents both a transcendent and historically unique interpretation of Śākyamuni's lifetime. Nichiren, among others, attached importance to the historical specificity of Śākyamuni and his teachings, and hence understood the *Lotus Sutra* to demand attention to the preaching or evangelical spread of the true teachings.

I. Introduction

A. Linear and cyclical time

Long held assumptions dictate a fundamental difference between Western and Eastern notions of time and history: whereas the former are linear and finite, giving human history a particularistic reality and even urgency, the latter are cyclical and infinite, rendering human history, and hence human action — ethical action — within that history inconsequential. The Judaic messianic tradition and its Christian refiguration as eschatological promise/fulfillment are taken as superb examples of the linear orientation, premised as they are on one-time

¹ This paper was originally presented at the Third International Conference on the *Lotus Sutra* (Tokyo, 1997) and I am grateful to Geene Reeves and Jan Nattier for their comments; portions are also drawn from my forthcoming work on the decline of the dharma and developments in Chinese Buddhism.

events that erupt into human history and change it (or end it) forever, teleologically and inevitably moving to a final perfection. This eschatological promise of final perfection is contrasted with a cyclical Indic cosmogony that renders the notion of a final end to world history meaningless, lost to the greater significance of cosmic repetition. In this vision there is no final end to history, no world telos, and, therefore, ultimately no progress at all. We should note that it is the fate of humanity *qua* society that is seen to be at stake here, with the Western, linear vision of time functioning as a theodicy that, based upon the belief in a perfected and final future, engenders as well the specifics of a forward-moving and historically specific soteriology through which it may be or must be effected. More importantly for our purposes, however, is the ethical importance attached to human action in such a “one chance only” view of history, an emphasis that is lacking in a transcendent or existential view of time. Thomas Altizer, for example, has been one of the strongest advocates of the need for a historical reading of Judeo/Christian eschatology, for in a spiritualization of the revolutionary impulse of that view of time “Jesus is detached from history and viewed as an ‘existential’ Word” and thereby “faith ceases to be rebellion and becomes, instead, either escape or submission” whereas “genuine Christian existence must be directed to a rebellious attack upon the ‘realities’ of profane existence, and it is to just this attack that Jesus’ ethical message calls the disciple” (Altizer 1961: 102, 110-111).

B. The eternal return

The Indic approach, on the other hand, as Heinrich Zimmer characterized it decades ago, is exactly individual and transcendent rather than social and historical, leading to a “fundamentally skeptical attitude toward social progress.” He writes,

This viewpoint [of world history] from on high is not to be shared by the chorus of actors, by the gods and demons, engrossed by their roles, but is achieved through the supreme aloofness of the ascetic renunciation of Siva, and through his attitude of spiritual indifference. To reach this perfection of his, is, among

men, a privilege reserved for single, outstanding individuals, saints, ascetics, and yogin, who transcend the Māyā of phenomenal existence by their own efforts; but the world-process as a whole is not meant for a gradual progress toward perfection. It is the peculiar glory of Western idealism, with Christianity broadening into progressive humanitarianism, to have conceived such a goal, and to foster an ardent faith which embarks again and again, after each setback, on its quest for collective perfection (Zimmer: 168).

Perhaps the most well-known proponent of this contrast has been Mircea Eliade, whose comparative studies of cosmogony and eschatology led to his elaboration of the “Eternal Return,” a primitive view of time and history characterized by cyclical accounts of the countless beginnings and ends of world time. To these “countless beginnings and ends” he contrasts an “innovation of the first importance,” the Judeo-Christian doctrine of a singular beginning, linear progression, and a triumphal endtime which represents the forsaking of “the circular Time of the Eternal Return [to] become a linear and irreversible Time... [that] also represents the triumph of a Sacred History” (Eliade: 64-65).

On first reading one is tempted to simply identify the many 19th and early 20th century Euro-centric constructions that inform this understanding, including an evolutionary or teleological view of history/humankind with Christianity the developmental highpoint, an historical positivism or realism, and a somewhat facile Weber-esque view of the “East” as embodying an otherworldly form of asceticism that precludes finding meaning or value in worldly participation and social development. Still, and in spite of the many alternative readings that have been offered of this generalization (e.g., the myth of eternal return breeds equanimity and optimism not resignation and despair, Judeo-Christian eschatological thinking has also “suffered” a transcendental inversion, the postmodern West is likewise freed from historical positivism and linear history, etc.), by and large the general scheme of linear time and world-historical eschaton versus a cyclic cosmos and transcendent, ahistorical salvation, with its various nuances, has been upheld (King: 177, 181; O’Leary: 29-30). Altizer, for example, one of the few Christian theologians to give Buddhist

eschatological thinking serious and sympathetic consideration, concluded that even the Zen negation of “Buddhist transcendentalism... [that] fully parallels the radical Christian negation of transcendence” represents “a form of ‘apocalypticism’ in which nothing actually happens, in which there is neither world- nor self-transformation” (Altizer 1970: 229-230). Similarly, the Buddhologist Roger Corless has written that,

History is an academic discipline that has developed in the western hemisphere. The western hemisphere has been strongly influenced by the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and their conception of time as something created by God in and through which God manifests himself. On this view, time is meaningful. It has a beginning and an end, and the end is a goal, so that there is development, a progressive achievement of the goal... History as a secular discipline has many of the features of the Abrahamic tradition’s view of time... the assumption that time is meaningful and that development is real does not seem to have been given up by even the most radical critics of the philosophy of history. Buddhism, on the other hand, sees things as changing over time, but it does not see things as becoming more meaningful as they change. Change, for Buddhism, is a primary characteristic of cyclic existence (*samsara*), and history is just a lot of change. All that we can say about history, Buddhistically, is that as time goes on we get more of it (Corless: xix).

Buddhism is thus likewise seen to be concerned with individual liberation to a timeless truth in which sequential time is overshadowed by cyclical recurrence and the historical past by the predicted future appearance of the Buddha Maitreya, whose appearance is yet so many billions of aeons in the future as to render it meaningless in terms of current events. Thus Buddhists, following the cyclical model and lacking a world-historical eschaton, are seen to define the end of all things not as a consummation of world history but rather as individual liberation from it, as with Zimmer’s Śiva. Winston King, for example, sums up this attitude in comparison with the “world-shattering events” of Western eschatologies, noting that Buddhism,

points to the individual-existential situation as being more truly eschatological, i.e. as having to do with the *truly* ultimate [Nibbāna]... Nibbāna was essentially non- or super-historical, available limitedly in even the worst ages... It has *essentially* nothing to do with historical events but is human being face to face

with Ultimate Ineffable Being, a state that fully and finally transcends historical and cosmic event, and individual life and death (King: 182).

C. Specific time in Buddhist history

Leaving aside for the moment the validity of the overall generalization as well as the prescriptive evaluation of Zimmer and Eliade, we can of course find any number of traditions, persons, and historiographies within Buddhism that would seem to present, at the very least, minor counterpoints of concern for specific and social historicism to the overall theme of recurrence and individual transcendence if not a fully world-historical eschaton. The *Kālacakra* (“Wheel of Time”), Jien’s *Gukanshō*, the dispensationalism inherent in the “Three Turnings of the Wheel,” the various Buddhist national narratives, and other examples may be cited in this regard. Another such counterpoint is the Buddhist tradition of the decline and/or demise of its own teaching, a tradition that is often considered to parallel Judeo-Christian eschatological thinking. Indeed, the stories that relate these traditions, most of which are patently *ex-post facto* descriptions of actual events cast in the form of prophecies, evince a strong concern for specific history, linear timetables, the location of historical figures within those linear chronologies (usually as well a means of locating oneself within the same chronologies), and, most conspicuously, a great concern for the temporal relationship between the present time and the past time of the historical Buddha.

Unlike the cosmic and cyclical schemes of multiple, coexisting Buddhas the teaching of the decline of the dharma is concerned neither with recurring events nor grand visions of eternity but with the declining fortunes of the unique teachings of a singular historical figure brought about not by the inevitable and relentless progress of the cosmos but by specific *and avoidable* human failings, and, most interestingly, human failings of the Buddhist community. Rather than being dwarfed by the greater significance or ultimacy of the cosmic cycle, the individual’s location in temporal relation to Śākyamuni, the Buddha of our historical time, thus takes on a special urgency. Hence

too successively distant ages were seen to require different “dispensations” of the dharma so as to accord with the times of the practitioner, an idea fundamental to the Pure Land tradition and one which renders temporal change important indeed. Concluding her overview of the many Buddhist traditions of its own decline, for example, Jan Nattier argued that, at least in these traditions, “the question of ‘what time it is’ has mattered, and at times has mattered very much, to a substantial proportion of Buddhist believers” (Nattier: 141). Indeed, Nattier has argued that the overall context of the decline tradition is analogous to that which inspired the prophets of the Hebrew bible, whose sharp social and religious critiques surely comprise one of the great sources of socio-ethical thinking.

D. The decline of the dharma in East Asian Buddhism

In East Asia, however, a curious change occurs: on the one hand, the a-historical, cosmological and cyclical traditions of innumerable Buddhas of the past, present, and future give rise to the imperative for historical change found in the messianic and apocalyptic Maitreya movements.² On the other hand, the more historical traditions of decline are refigured in such a way that the decline is understood to be existential rather than historical, and essential or constitutive of human experience rather than acquired and hence avoidable or alterable. Thus, perhaps representing the culmination of this trend, Shinran wrote in the thirteenth century that the decline of the dharma was a matter of existential reality for living beings in the age of the true dharma as well as the age of decline, and, more recently, the Kyoto School philosopher Tanabe Hajime discussed the decline of the dharma in terms of a “constitutive evil” of humanity; both require the saving power of the *dharmakāya*, a timeless and transcendent truth represented, notably, by the Buddha of Immeasurable Life. Although

² See, for example, Daniel L. Overmeyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) and Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre, eds. *Maitreya, The Future Buddha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

this shift perhaps represents a return to what Winston King referred to as the “more truly eschatological” concern for the transcendence of the “individual-existential situation,” a return to the “true” emphasis of the Buddhist tradition (similar to Zimmer’s transcendent view of the Hindu tradition), it can also be seen as analogous to the transcendental inversion that Altizer has criticized in Christian eschatological thinking. If this is indeed the case, does this also validate the view of Buddhism as, in the end, unconcerned with linear time and world-historical eschatologies, and, by extension, contributing to that oft-noted lack of social and ethical consciousness in the Buddhist, especially East Asian Buddhist, traditions? And where does the *Lotus Sutra*, conspicuous in its emphasis on the cosmic and infinite yet also giving rise to some of the more socially activist Buddhist traditions, fit into this scheme? I believe that the answer to this question lies in its equal emphasis on the decline of the teachings of the historical Buddha, an emphasis expressed as an imperative to preserve and spread those teachings, in short, the imperative to preach, an important but little-studied aspect of the Buddhist tradition.³ In order to better understand these issues, let me briefly outline the origins of the decline tradition before turning to the way in which this tradition was incorporated into the *Lotus Sutra*.

II. The true dharma and its decline

A. Not the transcendent truth that disappears

At many points within the Buddhist tradition we find a dynamic tension between the rhetoric of an unbounded, a-temporal truth (*dharmaṭā*) and the representation of that truth as the teachings of a historical person, and it is within the latter, that is, within *Buddh-ism*, the vicissitudes of the teachings in the world, that the tradition of the

³ Some recent articles that deal with this topic include Mahinda Deegalle, “Buddhist preaching and Sinhala Religious Rhetoric: Medieval Buddhist Methods to Popularize Theravāda” in *Numen*, Vol. 44 (1997); Andrew Olendzki, “Mission and Dialogue: A Paradox?” in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 17 (1997).

true dharma (*saddharma*) and its decline takes shape. Thus we should note from the very beginning that it was never the dharma conceived as the causal uniformity of all things (*dhammatā*) that was believed to decline or disappear. As is well known, that will remain the same whether the tathagatas were to arise or not to arise (Woodward, Part II: 21). Hui-yuan (523-592), for example, lamenting the lot of the Buddhist church at the hands of Emperor Wu, states,

This is the fate of our time... it is truly lamentable that we are unable to attend [the Buddha-dharma] at this time, but the truth of the Dharma cannot be vanquished! I ask that you virtuous ones please understand this and not be overly grieved (T #2060, 50.490c).

This is more important than has usually been recognized, for it directs our attention to the lived tradition of the teachings as the locus of the timeless, ahistorical truths that more often are the focus of doctrinal study. That is to say, rather than the essential truth of the dharma per se it highlights the importance of the teachings, and the spirited rivalry over who maintains the correct teachings are at the core of both the production of the decline traditions as well as their later sectarian use.

B. Origins of *saddharma*

1. *Nikāya Buddhism*

All religions that stem from the vision, charisma, and leadership authority of a historical founder face a turning point after he or she passes away and is no longer directly available to determine matters of doctrine and practice among the followers. Buddhism was no exception to this rule, particularly in light of the fact that Śākyamuni refused to appoint a successor, declaring instead that the dharma was to guide the community after his passing. Thus the years following Śākyamuni's passing saw any number of occasions on which questions of interpretation of dharma arose, quickly leading to codified versions of institutional rules and teachings, and the tradition also preserves stories of the various councils and other means whereby

the community sought to preserve those authoritative teachings. It is in this context of the time following the historical Buddha, then, that the question of preservation and interpretation becomes important, and it was quickly seen that, all other things considered, conservative literalism offered a formidable means of accurate preservation and propagation of the dharma. By “conservative literalism” I am referring to a resistance to change any portion of the accepted canon, including, as we shall see, the language and literary forms as well as the content.

In addition to councils and other forms of canon-creation, one of the means whereby the early Buddhist community attempted to secure this conservative literalism was through the rhetoric of the decline or even disappearance of the *saddhamma* (Skt. *saddharma*), the “true dharma” or the “good dharma.” Although *saddhamma* can simply mean a good or auspicious thing (as, for example, in the “seven *saddhamma*” of faith, shame, appreciation of consequence, learning the teachings, vigor, mindfullness, and wisdom), in the context of the decline tradition throughout the Pali literature it is used to indicate the teachings that must be safeguarded and which will be lost without due diligence. In other words, *saddhamma* is used to refer to the authoritative teachings (*pariyatti*) in contradistinction to mis-interpretations, false attributions, mis-quotes, and other deviations from the proper and accurate transmission of the teaching, and it was argued that lack of attention to this proper transmission of the *saddhamma* would lead to its disappearance.

The *Āriguttara-Nikāya*, for example, tells us that we must guard not only against those who would fabricate the word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*) from whole cloth, that is, those who would claim “as utterances of the Tathāgata, what he never said or uttered, and he who denies what was said or uttered by the Tathāgata,” but also against the one “who proclaims as already explained a discourse which needs explanation (*neyattha*), and he who proclaims as needing explanation a discourse already explained (*nītattha*)” (Woodward vol. 1: 54).⁴

⁴ Cf. T #2, 592c-593a. Ron Davidson, in “Standards of Scriptural Authenticity” (*Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha* [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990], 294-

Another *sutta* from the *Ānguttara-Nikāya* that shows a concern for even literal orthodoxy warns against “the wrong expression of the letter (of the text) and wrong interpretation of the meaning of it,” which would lead to the “confusion and disappearance” of the true dhamma, for “if the letter be wrongly expressed, the interpretation of the meaning is also wrong.” On the other hand, “if the letter be rightly expressed, the interpretation of the meaning is also right” which leads to the “establishment, the non-confusion, to the non-disappearance of true Dhamma” (Woodward 1951, vol. 1: 53). Here we are clearly (and quite “literally”) told that it is the *letter of the law* and not the spirit (“interpretation of the meaning”) that is of central importance in the preservation of the *dhamma*.⁵ The section on the confounding of the *saddhamma* from the *Ānguttara-Nikāya* similarly warns that a careless attitude towards the hearing, mastering, contemplating, analyzing, and practicing the *dhamma* would lead to its disappearance (Hare vol. III: 132).⁶ The order — hearing and mastering first and practice last — clearly indicates the priority of orthodoxy relative to orthopraxy. It is somewhat ironic, of course, that, as in the writings of the New Testament, the concern for accurate transmission of the true teachings actually indicates the existence of differing interpretations, differing visions, and no doubt differing transmissions. Although there are other traditions, doctrinal deviation and dissension within the sangha is by far the most conspicuous threat to the preservation of the *saddhamma* in the early texts; no doubt the

97), notes that the complementary attitude is that the dharma is more than the literal words of the Śākyamuni Buddha, and encompasses all that is spoken from the vantage point of the truth per se (*dharmaṭā*) or that conduces to its realization, including the teaching of previous Buddhas as well as his enlightened disciples. Still, the tendency has been to try to validate teaching by somehow or another giving it the legitimacy of the more literal meaning of Buddhavacana (Robert A. McDermott, “Scripture as the Word of the Buddha,” *Numen*, 31 [July 1984] 30-31; see also Davidson, 303-305).

⁵ The countervailing attitude is found in the Buddha’s well-known injunction *against* formalizing the language of the dharma, preferring instead, for example, regional dialects (Davidson: 292-293).

⁶ See also Hare: 180-181, 239-40; Woodward 1951, vol. IV: 49-50.

teachings of the emerging Mahayana were among those new teachings and interpretations targeted by the rhetoric of decline.

2. *Mahayana*

Just as the *nikāya* rhetoric of the decline of the dharma was really an exhortation to preserve the dharma and never meant to indicate that the teachings were actually gone, the Mahayana appropriation of that rhetoric remains fundamentally a rhetoric of doctrinal legitimacy; it functions not, however, by arguing that the decline can be staved off by hewing to a conservative orthodoxy but rather by claiming that its own doctrines are not only superior in truth value but uniquely efficacious in the “latter days” (*paścimakāla*) after the passing of the Buddha.⁷ The first step to the eventual use of the decline motif as legitimizing a new “dispensation” of the dharma was the Mahayana transformation of the terms of its deployment. That is, while the Mahayana continued the strategy of claiming a literal form of orthodoxy (*buddhavacana*) for their traditions and texts (for example, the story of Nāgārjuna’s recovery of the *Perfection of Wisdom* texts), they also re-figured the decline motif in such a way as to change its meaning from a time when the dharma would be gone or supplanted by false dharma to a time when its own superior dharma would not merely still be available, but, as proven precisely by its persistence, tested and certified in its superiority.

No doubt aware that the most common chronologies of decline described the time of their own activity and likely sensitive as well to the charge of creating “new” or “counterfeit” dharma, we find that one of the most prominent uses of the decline motif in the Mahayana is as a “proof metaphor” to stylistically indicate its own superior truth value in such a time. Self-conscious in its reaction to the conservative *nikāya* attempt to preserve the tradition, this strain is both highly

⁷ It might be more accurate to say that the Mahayana texts, perhaps self-consciously, include a move to argue their legitimacy not only upon their literal claim to the status of *buddhavacana* but also upon their claim to better represent truth (*dharmatā*) *per se*.

specific ("this text is the *saddharma* and will be *uniquely* efficacious in such troubled times") at the same time it claims the high ground of the universal, hearkening more to the truth per se or *dharmatā* than its historical encapsulation — like the truth-body (*dharmakāya*) of the Buddha himself, the word of the Buddha is ever available to those who will but listen. The *Vajracchedikā*, for example, in speaking of the "the future time, in the latter age, in the latter period, in the latter five hundred years, when the True Dharma is in the process of decay"⁸ exhibits little concern with such a period as a historical time of declining capacity: "Even at that time, Subhuti, there will be bodhisattvas who are gifted with good conduct, gifted with virtuous qualities, gifted with wisdom, and who, when these words of the Sutra are being taught, will understand their truth" (Nattier: 31, 57). The *Vajracchedikā* speaks of the "latter five-hundred years, when the True Dharma is in the process of decay" only as an opportunity to contrast its own continued efficacy. It thereby co-opted the *topoi* of the *nikāya* rhetoric, asserting its superiority based not simply on a claim to represent literal and historical orthodoxy (*buddhavacana*) but also on truth value and hence relevance even in a time of decay, a time for which the "Hinayana" had already prophesized their own lack of efficacy.⁹

⁸ See also Nattier's discussion of the Sanskrit and Chinese variants of this phrase: 33-37, 91-94, 106 n. 111; other texts of the *Prajñāparāmita* corpus which use substantially the same formula include *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom* (trans. E. Conze, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 328 (minus the reference to "the latter five-hundred years") and the *Suvikrāntavikrāmi-Pariprcchā Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra* (ed. by Ryusho Hikata, Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 1983), 124 (Chinese translation 565 by Upaśūnya, T #231, 8.231b).

⁹ The *Pratyutpannabuddhasammukhāvasthitasamādhi-sūtra* even claims that it will disappear until the latter period of decay (Paul Harrison, *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter* [Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1990], 96 ff)!

III. Transcendent and particular time in the Lotus

A. The Immeasurable duration of the True Dharma

The functional origins of the term *saddhamma* were not lost on the redactors of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, a text which extols the most inclusive ideal of the Buddhist tradition at the same time that it is passionate in asserting its own status as the “true dharma” (*saddharma*) and “sole vehicle” (*ekayāna*). Similarly, the *Lotus* combines a distinctly cosmic and cyclical view of the universe with the same sort of specific and apologetic perspective found in the *Vajracchedikā*. The former outlook, that is, the perspective of the eternal return, is found in the many references to twenty minor kalpas of the True Dharma followed by twenty intermediate kalpas of the Semblance, or forty kalpas of each, or thirty-two kalpas of each, etc. and, of course, in the central teaching of the immeasurable lifetime of the Buddha.¹⁰

O Mahāsthāmaprāpta, the life-span of the Buddha Bhīṣmagarjitasvararāja was as kalpas equal to forty myriads of *kotis* of *nayutas* of sands of the Ganges River. The true Dharma abided for kalpas equal to the number of particles in Jambudvipa. The derivative Dharma abided for kalpas equal to the number of particles in the four continents. After having benefited the sentient beings, the Buddha entered *parinirvāṇa*. After the extinction of the true and derivative Dharmas, there appeared in this land another Buddha who was also called Bhīṣmagarjitasvararāja, . . . In this way there appeared two myriads of *kotis* of Buddhas one after another, all of whom had the same name (Kubo and Yuyama: 267-268).

Although not in the same place or even in the same context as its references to the two periods of True and Semblance, like the *Vajracchedikā* the *Lotus* also speaks of the time “after the Tathāgata’s final nirvana, in the latter age, the latter period, the latter five-hundred years, when the True Dharma is in decay.”¹¹ The Chinese translation

¹⁰ E.g., T #262, 9.20c, 21a, 21c, 29c, *passim*.

¹¹ Skt: *tathāgatasya parinirvṛtasya paścime kāle paścime samaye paścimāyāṁ pancāśatyāṁ saddharma-vipralope vartamana*, from *Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra*, edited by U. Wogihara and C. Tsuchida (Tokyo: Sankibō Book Store, 1958), 241.

by Kumarajiva even uses the term “*mo fa*” or “final dharma,” possibly the first occurrence of the term.¹²

Given the use of the two periods of the dharma and the presence of decline motif, many are tempted to see the *Lotus Sutra* as a primary source for the tripartite schema of decline that became so influential in Japan (that is, the three periods of the True Dharma, Semblance Dharma, and Final Dharma). Although, as discussed below, I do think that it contributed greatly to the “hermeneutics of orthodoxy” so much a part of the decline traditions, we need to be very careful in assessing its contributions to the chronological orderings of decline. That is, its usage of the two periods of the dharma are more likely drawing on the cosmological traditions than the *topos* of decline, which explains why the settings in which the periods of the True Dharma and the Semblance Dharma appear are so exaggerated (myriads of millions of kalpas, kalpas equal to the number of atoms in the continent of Jambudvīpa, etc.). Thus too the cyclical nature of these descriptions, in which, after the two periods of a Buddha’s dharma, a Buddha of the same name will appear, as many as “twenty hundred thousand myriad’s of kotis of Buddhas,” of the same name.¹³ Finally, and most telling, none of these cyclical descriptions are of the duration of the historical Buddha’s dharma, whereas the instances of the decline motif are typically represented as the decline of Śākyamuni’s dharma (Nattier: 85-86).

Further, although the *Lotus* presents a clear two period scheme in which the Semblance Dharma follows and is, at least chronologically, distinct from the period of *saddharma*, which is also chronologically distinct from the lifetime of the various tathagatas (which, interestingly, adds up to “three periods of the dharma”), there is no sense here of a qualitative difference between the periods. The *Lotus Sutra* does not speak of the two periods in terms of decay or sequential loss of capacity, rather, as Nattier has shown, this use of the Semblance Dharma indicates precisely that period after the death of the Buddha

¹² T #262, 9.37c.

¹³ E.g., T #262, 9.50c.

when his teachings *were* available, hence “it refers to the real and ongoing presence of the *saddharma*” (Nattier: 86). But even this is not the real point of this *topos*: the two periods of the dharma as described in the *Lotus Sutra* are rather related to the grand cosmic drama of the Buddha’s immeasurable lifetime, the basic theme of the sutra, and not the theme of decline.¹⁴ In a manner typical of Indian rhetorical style, the *Lotus* bolsters this drama with incomprehensible numbers (such as “immeasurable, innumerable thousands of myriads of millions of kalpas”). Given that the periods of True Dharma and Semblance Dharma (*saddharma-pratirūpaka*) are not used in the same part of the text or same context with the “latter 500 years” when the True Dharma is in decay (*saddharma-vipralopa*) it is not unreasonable to assume that we have two entirely different strands of the tradition coming together in the same text. Aside from the textual evidence that the two represent different *topoi*, there is also a rather glaring doctrinal inconsistency in the notion of a period of the destruction of the dharma following the Buddha’s extinction or final nirvana, given the *Lotus Sutra*’s insistence that his final nirvana was but a fiction and his lifetime in fact is immeasurable. We can thus conclude that the trope of the two periods represents the eternal return or the transcendent view, whereas the decline motif represents a concern for linear and unique history. What, then, is the practical thrust of that concern for linear and specific history?

B. The destruction of the True Dharma: *Saddharma-vipralopa*

Although the *Lotus* never became a major source in the early Chinese development of the decline tradition, it *is* filled with reference to decay, the “latter 500 years,” and the like in the context of doctrinal persecution, concern for teaching and conversion, and a polemic

¹⁴ Even in China it seems that the settings and descriptions of the two periods in the *Lotus* are much too far beyond a sense of history to inculcate any sense of historical or social foreboding, as the *Lotus* is not mentioned in the standard lists and encyclopedias of decline texts such as the *Fa yüan chu lin*, which lists over fifteen references to the decline but makes no mention of the *Lotus* (T #2122, 53.1005 ff).

assertiveness about its own message, and it is in this that I believe we can see the significance of its use of the decline motif. Of course, the most obvious example of this is the co-opting of *saddharma* for the title of the text itself (Hubbard, 1995: 124-125). That is, much like the *Vajracchedikā*, the *Lotus* uses the theme of the decline not in order to wail and bemoan the sad fate of the true dharma but rather as an opportunity to assert the importance of the *hearkening* to true dharma (albeit redefined), particularly in such a period. Thus, according to the text, due to the power of the sutra itself there will still be those who will gain innumerable merits and enter into nirvana if they but receive, hold, preserve, and transmit it.¹⁵ In this way, and as with the earlier traditions, the rhetoric of decline is deployed in the *Lotus* not to condemn moral decay but rather to assert its own importance. Indeed, if we examine the specific instances in which this trope occurs, we find that virtually *all* references that make use of the terms of the decline tradition (i.e., the “age of decay,” “evil age,” “five defilements,” “latter five-hundred years,” “latter age after Śākyamuni’s *parinirvāna*,” and the like) are accompanied by some sort of declaration of the continued efficacy of the *Lotus*, a vow to spread and teach it even in such a period, the abuse that its defenders can expect to face in such a period, the merit that will accrue from teaching it, etc.¹⁶ Broadly speaking this rhetorical context can be divided into three types, though there is considerable overlap among them: 1) the merit of preserving the *Lotus Sutra* in the latter age and the virtues of those who do so; 2) how to preach the *Lotus Sutra* in the latter age; and 3) the faults of those who reject the *Lotus Sutra* in the latter age, typically mixed with the merits of accepting it. It is also interesting that those portions of the *Lotus* generally thought to

¹⁵ E.g., T #262, 9.10b (Chapter 2), 31a (Chapter 10), 38c (Chapter 14), etc. See Jan Nattier, “The *Candragarbha-sūtra* in Central and East Asia” (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1988), Appendix 2 for a complete list of all references to the “latter age” in the various versions of the *Lotus*.

¹⁶ Similarly, in the *Mahāparivirvāna-sūtra* use of a seven-hundred year timetable of decay, “Though certain moral failings (especially on the part of the monks) are mentioned, issues of doctrine are given greater attention” (Nattier, p. 39).

be the earliest (i.e., chapters 2-9) contain no references to the decline, which predominate in the middle layer, suggesting that the decline trope was added during the process of expansion as a means of encouraging those who had come under fire for preaching the original text.¹⁷ This fits in well with my thesis that the central message of the decline trope is the preaching of the dharma, for as Shiori Ryōdō notes, the dominant theme of the middle layer of the *Lotus* (where we find the majority of references to the decline) is to “emphasize the command to propagate the *Lotus Sutra* in society as opposed to the predictions given in [the earlier chapters of] the future attainment of buddhahood by the disciples.”¹⁸ Let us look briefly at some examples of each category, and then consider the effect that this had on Nichiren, perhaps the most famous disciple of the *Lotus Sutra* and one who certainly took seriously its message of decline and the attendant need to preach its truth.

1. Virtues of preserving the *saddharma* in the latter, evil age¹⁹

Know that anyone who preserves the *Lotus Sutra*
 Is an ambassador of the Buddha
 Who feels compassion for sentient beings.
 Those who preserve the *Lotus Sutra*
 Were born here in this world,
 Withholding themselves from the pure land
 Out of their compassion for sentient beings.
 Know that such people are born
 Where and when they will.
 They are born in this evil age

¹⁷ I am indebted to Jan Nattier for pointing this out to me.

¹⁸ Shiori Ryōdō, “The Meaning of the Formation and Structure of the *Lotus Sutra*,” in George J. Tanabe, Jr. and Willa Jane Tanabe, eds. *The Lotus Sutra in Japanese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 31.

¹⁹ For further examples of the virtue of preserving the true dharma see also T #262, 9.31a (Chapter 10), 34a (Chapter 11), 37a (Chapter 14), 37c-38a (Chapter 14), 38b (Chapter 14), 39c (Chapter 14), 46a (Chapter 17), 51b (Chapter 20), 54b (Chapter 23), 61b (Chapter 20), and 62a (Chapter 18).

To extensively expound the highest Dharma.
Such expounders of the Dharma should be revered
With offerings of divine flowers, perfumes,
Heavenly jeweled clothing and exquisite celestial jewels.
Those who preserve the Sutra
In the evil age after my *parinirvāna*,
Should be paid homage with palms pressed together—
Just as one pays homage to the Bhagavat.

T #262, 9. 31a (Chapter 10); Kubo and Yuyama: 161-162

Bhagavat! If there are those who preserve this Sutra in the corrupt and evil age of the latter five hundred years, I will protect them and rid them of their heavy cares, make them attain happiness and allow no one to strike at them through their weaknesses.

T #262, 9.61a (Chapter 28); Kubo and Yuyama: 321

2. Teaching the *saddharma* in the latter age²⁰

After my passing into *parinirvāna*, during the latter five-hundred years, you must spread it far and wide on the Jambudvīpa Continent and not allow it to be destroyed... you should protect this Sutra with your transcendent power. Why is this? Because this Sutra is good medicine for the ills of the people on this Jambudvīpa Continent.

T #262, 9.54c (Chapter 23); Kubo and Yuyama: 289

3. Rejecting the *saddharma* in the latter age²¹

If in the latter age there is anyone
Who preserves this Sutra,
I will dispatch him to the world of humans
To carry out the Tathāgata's task.
If throughout one entire kalpa

²⁰ For further examples of the exhortation to spread the true dharma in the latter age see also T #262, 9.37b (Chapter 14), 37c (Chapter 14), 38b (Chapter 14), 38c (Chapter 14), 39a (Chapter 14), and 51b (Chapter 20).

²¹ For further examples of the retribution for rejection the *Lotus* in the latter age see also T #262, 9.10b (Chapter 2), 36b (Chapter 13), 36c (Chapter 13), and 62a (Chapter 28).

There is anyone with erring thoughts
 Who always disparages the Buddha
 With an angry complexion, the consequences of
 His grave errors will be incalculable.
 If there is anyone who speaks
 A hostile word even for an instant
 About those who recite and preserve this *Lotus Sutra*,
 His fault will be even greater.

T #262, 9.31a-b (Chapter 10); Kubo and Yuyama: 162

In the evil age of the corrupt kalpa
 There are many fearful things.
 People possessed by evil spirits
 Will scorn and slander us.
 But we shall wear the armor of patience
 Because we trust and revere the Buddha;
 And we will persevere under these difficulties
 In order to teach the Sutra.

T #262, 9.36c (Chapter 3); Kubo and Yuyama: 193

Clearly, then, the primary use of the decline motif in the *Lotus Sutra* is to argue for the need to preserve and spread its message, that is, an exhortation to the preacher of the *Lotus*. The evil, latter age is not, of course, the only context in which upholding and teaching the *Lotus Sutra* is extolled — indeed, this is one of the major themes of the scripture. As I have earlier argued, “This reminds us that, together with Christianity and Islam, Buddhism is a missionary religion, and the role of the preacher as missionary [*dharmabhanaka*] is indeed forcefully argued throughout the *Lotus Sutra*. Thus, too, we should remember that... the primary function of *upāya* is discovered in the *preaching* activity of the bodhisattvas,” that is to say, offering the gift of the dharma (Hubbard 1995: 127). Given the earlier use of the decline motif to argue for a more conservative orthodoxy, its re-deployment to justify the new dispensation of the *Lotus* must represent a deliberate strategy of accommodation.

IV. The evangelist Nichiren

Nichiren was one who clearly embraced the import of the *Lotus Sutra*'s combination of the rhetoric of decline with the mission and virtue of preaching the true dharma. That is, although the *Lotus Sutra*, as with Mahayana scriptures in general, may have appropriated the tradition of the decline in order to assert their own orthodoxy or truth value in such an age, for those like Nichiren who came to believe that they were actually living in the predicted age of the final dharma (as the latter age had come to be understood, Chin. *mo-fa*, Jap. *mappō*), the issue was more pressing, and on this issue the *Lotus* is forceful: during the period of the latter dharma the practical imperative is none other than that of the *dharma-bhāṇaka*, the preacher of the dharma, specifically the preacher of the true dharma of the *Lotus Sutra*. For Nichiren, the logic was easy: the supreme practice of the Mahayana generally is that of the bodhisattva, and the supreme gift of the bodhisattva is the gift of the teachings, the gift of the dharma. By Nichiren's time, however, there were many interpretations of the dharma contending for the place of *saddharma*. As Jackie Stone has put it, "Nichiren's search for a teaching valid in the *mappō* era stemmed from a desire for objective truth. Contention among rival Buddhist sects — exemplifying the *Ta-chi-ching*'s prediction of an age when 'quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my teachings'... awoke in him a resolve to discover which, among the so-called 'eighty-thousand teachings,' represented the Buddha's true intention and could benefit people in the last age... Eventually he concluded that the *Lotus Sutra*, and none other, represented the pinnacle of Shakyamuni's teachings" (Stone, 44).

Envisioning himself to be doing the work of Viśiṣṭacārita, leader of the bodhisattvas that spring up from the earth to take charge of "extensively teaching" the *Lotus* after Śākyamuni's final nirvana, Nichiren took personally the commission to propagate the *Lotus* during the latter days of the dharma. In view of the historical specificity of the decline tradition, it is also significant that Nichiren understood that it was because the bodhisattvas from under the earth had been personal

disciples of Śākyamuni in the past that he entrusted the propagation of the *Lotus* to them in the latter age and turned down the request of the numerous other bodhisattvas (Watson: 174). So too his stress on the historical Buddha as the refuge for this age rather than Amida or other cosmic Buddhas. His sense of the importance of the specific, linear time in the development of Buddhism is also clearly seen in the *Senji Shō*, “The Selection on Time,” in which he narrates the history of Buddhism from Śākyamuni to his own day in the context of the decline of the dharma. As he writes in the opening sentence, “One who wishes to study the teachings of Buddhism must first learn to understand the time” (Watson: 183). His conclusion, of course, is that in the latter age of the final dharma the propagation of the *Lotus Sutra* was the supreme path, albeit a difficult path. Nonetheless, and for Nichiren this was the important message of the *Lotus*, to give the gift of the dharma and establish sentient beings in truth is the ethical imperative at the core of the true dharma, even if it means abuse and vilification:

I am fully aware that if I do not speak out, I will be lacking in compassion. I have considered which course to take in the light of the teachings of the *Lotus* and *Nirvana* sutras. If I remain silent, I may escape harm in this lifetime, but in my next life I will most certainly fall into the hell of incessant suffering. If I speak out, I am fully aware that I will have to contend with the three obstacles and the four devils. But of these two courses, surely the latter is the one to choose... Persons like myself who are of paltry strength might still be able to lift Mount Sumeru and toss it about; persons like myself who are lacking in spiritual powers might still shoulder a load of dry grass and yet remain unburned in the fire at the end of the kalpa of decline; and persons like myself who are without wisdom might still read and memorize as many sutras there are sands in the Ganges. But such acts are not difficult, we are told, when compared to the difficulty of embracing even one phrase or verse of the *Lotus Sutra* in the Latter Day of the Law. Nevertheless, I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings, and never to falter in my efforts. (Watson: 79).

For Nichiren, the advent of the latter age or the *final* dharma meant none other than a re-doubled effort to disseminate the *true* dharma, and he saw this mission precisely as the ethic of the bodhisattva, the mandate to save all beings through the gift of the truth. In this, I

believe, he was accurately reflecting the historical specificity of the decline motif, both in its original form as a polemic of orthodoxy and in the manner that it was employed within the *Lotus Sutra* as an injunction to preach the true dharma.

V. Conclusion

I have discussed the decline of the dharma in the *Lotus Sutra* as intimately related to what I consider to be one of the main themes of the *Lotus*, the propagation of the dharma and the missionary activity of the preacher of the dharma, the *dharmabhāṇika*. I have also tried to give a more general context for this discussion by contrasting a linear sense of time fraught with unique historical meaning with a more cosmic cycle of eternally recurring events, and have touched briefly on the ethical import typically ascribed to each. In this context the decline of the dharma is seen to be an example of a linear “eschatology” in which great concern is given to the specific history of Śākyamuni’s teachings and their continued existence in the world. In neither the early use of this tradition nor in its later Mahayana incarnation was it ever taught that the dharma was really gone, rather the decline was always used to exhort fidelity to a particular version of the true dharma. This theme is well represented in the *Lotus Sutra*, in which virtually every instance of the decline motif is accompanied by a reference to the True Dharma, the merits of upholding and propagating it, how to teach it, or the dangers of ignoring or slandering it. In these instances the True Dharma is not understood as transcendent truth but rather the specific truth of the *Lotus Sutra*.²² The cosmic, cyclical scheme of numerous Buddhas existing in numerous worlds,

²² The same specificity of the *Lotus* is seen in its use of *upāya*, in which the *Lotus* itself is never considered *upāya*, but rather the unsurpassed truth; this is quite different from the more thorough-going use of *upāya* in, for example, the *Vimalakirti-sūtra*, in which the doctrine of nonduality renders all utterances of the Buddhas equally provisional and equally *upāya*; ultimately, of course, this leads to the “thunderous silence of Vimalakirti” as the only possible “statement” of nonduality; cf. Hubbard 1995: 124.

appearing in countless and eternal succession, is also found in the *Lotus*, replete with reference to different periods of their dharma, and is thus often seen as related to the decline of the dharma, especially in the form of the three periods of the dharma (true, semblance, and final). However, the cyclical trope in which the two periods appear in the *Lotus* has been shown to be thematically and textually unrelated to the linear progression of the decline motif. I have also suggested that Nichiren read the decline theme of the *Lotus* not in terms of this theme of eternal return, but took the point of the rhetoric of the decline of the dharma to be specific and historical, to be in fact an exhortation to the accurate preservation and transmission of the true dharma, and to that end he worked tirelessly throughout his life. Nichiren was, no doubt, an evangelist: a person whose profound encounter with the message of truth in the *Lotus Sutra* converted him to a messenger seeking to bring the good news to all humanity. This tradition, then, is one in which a transcendent approach to time is thoroughly mediated by a concern for unique and specific history and individuals. More generally we could perhaps also say that it is this more linear sense of time, closely tied to the declining fortunes of the teachings of a particular human being and the difficulties that await those who would disseminate his teachings, that inspired Nichiren to make the link between the troubles of the predicted last times, his evangelical mission to establish the true teachings, and the peace and prosperity of the nation (*rishshō ankoku* 立正安國). That is to say that for Nichiren the ethical imperative of the bodhisattva in the latter age, the imperative to preach the true dharma, was linked to social concord as well. The vicissitudes of Nichiren's attempts to establish a peaceful nation are well known, as is the fact that in the late twentieth century it is mostly Nichiren-based movements that lead Japanese Buddhist organizations in any sort of social activism and international peace activities — groups such as the Risshō Kōseikai, Nipponzan Myohoji, and Soka Gakkai.²³ Finally, then, we could ask if this drive to social

²³ For a study of the relationship between the ideas of peace, individual moral cultivation, and national mission in Japanese new religious movements see Kisala 1996.

activism on the part of contemporary Nichiren-derived movements is in any part due to the fact that Nichiren himself drew his evangelical inspiration not from the cosmic and cyclical sense of time in the *Lotus Sutra*, the time of “eternal return,” but rather from the linear sense of time and distance from the founder equally found in the *Lotus Sutra*. The answer to this question, however, must await yet another time.

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PHENOMENOLOGY, SOCIOLOGY, AND HISTORY OF THE
NEW AGE

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Review article

HORST STENGER, *Die soziale Konstruktion okkuler Wirklichkeit: eine Soziologie des "New Age"*. Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 1993, 264 p., ISBN 3-8100-1035-9.

JAMES R. LEWIS and J. GORDON MELTON (Eds.), *Perspectives on the New Age*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992, 369 p., ISBN 0791-4214-8 (pbk.).

CHRISTOPH BOCHINGER, "New Age" und moderne Religion. Gütersloh: Christians Verlag/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994, 695 p., ISBN 3-579-00299-6.

MICHAEL YORK, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1995, 372 p., ISBN 08476-8000-2 (cloth).

PAUL HEELAS, *The New Age Movement: the Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, 266 p., ISBN 06311-9332-4 (pbk.).

WOUTER HANEGRAAFF, *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Studies in the History of Religions (NUMEN Book Series), 72. Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996, 580 p., ISBN 90-04-10695-2 (cloth).

Between 1993 and 1996, five substantial monographs have appeared on the phenomenon of the New Age. These five monographs vary in their approach and even more so in their attitude toward New Age as a religion; however, a study of them reveals that basically two distinct approaches emerge: a sociological approach that examines how the conditions of the (post-)modern Western world both frames and influences the ways in which New Age thought is itself structured and organized; and a historical and cultural approach that locates elements of New Age in even earlier traditions

and that seeks to define its historical origins as a religion. Each study provides a valuable set of insights reflective of the approach. However, what New Age is becomes most clear when we synchronize the two approaches and examine them in the light of each other. The arguments pointed to below will show that the New Age not only deserves attention as a new religion but should also be viewed as a cultural as well as a social expression of an immensely changing world. Accordingly, sociological and history of religions analyses are equally important and complementary of each other.

In *Die soziale Konstruktion okkuler Wirklichkeit*, Horst Stenger provides a scholarly and thorough inquiry into the study of New Age world views and forms of social organization. Using a context-oriented sociology of knowledge model enriched by constructivist theory, Stenger analyzes the New Age world in terms of the kinds of self-perception and worldview it has engendered. However, because Stenger is a sociologist and not primarily a scholar of religion, he tends to present the New Age phenomenon in a series of case studies and thus as an example for how all human beings aim to create a more or less coherent construction of "reality." Drawing on personal interviews, Stenger uses typical and key personal experiences throughout his book in order to establish New Age as a distinct and anti-mainstream way of thinking and living. For Stenger, the main function of this worldview is to provide sense and meaning for the believers in their everyday lives. However, Stenger's focus on the individual and biographical perspective (and even, one might say, on personal need), means that he does not focus, in any convincing way, on the broader sociological and/or history of ideas context of the New Age, or on the way that the individual stories might fit into a larger contextual and definitive understanding of the New Age phenomenon. For example, while Stenger presupposes that the New Age worldview is an occult one, he does not clarify the term nor examine New Age practices in relation to other historical occurrences of occult belief systems. Nor does he provide arguments for the popularity of New Age religion or its many diversifications in actual practice. But these potential "weaknesses" of Stenger's book give it, at the same time, a special merit. Stenger was the first scholar to point to the coherency and consistency of what he calls "the occult belief system" and in this book he looks at the major components of this system relative to each other. He resists the temptation to overvalue any one component in order to use it as an definition or indicator of the New Age phenomenon.

In 1992, a collection of essays edited by James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (*Perspectives on the New Age*) opened the way for a history of religions approach to the New Age. In these essays, various authors examine the historical roots and long-term developments of the movement, as well as provide valuable information on its international manifestation.

However, the history of religions discussion of the New Age was most fully opened by Christoph Bochinger in his voluminous monograph entitled "*New Age*" und *moderne Religion* (Gütersloh: Christians Verlag/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994). Bochinger took New Age research into an astonishingly different direction. After an admirably exhaustive treatment of the source material available in German, Bochinger comes to the surprising conclusion that the New Age is an illusion and at the same time an invention of the media. Bochinger's use of inverted commas whenever he refers to "New Age" and his efforts to connect New Age to contemporary religions on the whole — instead of distinguishing it from them — represent the skepticism that underlines his approach. Rather than analyze what New Age is and under what kind of cultural conditions it is flourishing, the book takes up more than 500 pages in order to show that the phenomenon in question does not exist. In taking this position, Bochinger exacerbates the finding of Hartmut Zinser, who also wrote in a 1992 article in the *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* that New Age was not a religion (ZRGG 44, p. 33-50; see my response to Zinser in the same journal, ZRGG 49,1 (1997), p. 71-83). Nevertheless, Bochinger's work contains valuable discussions on the nature of New Age Chiliasm, the history of the term "New Age," and its connections to esoteric thinking in the past. However, despite Bochinger's admirable research into these specific points, his overall study does not contribute to an understanding of what New Age religion is, either in terms of the religion as a coherent entity or as a set of current practices.

In *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age*, Michael York presents an overall survey of the social scientific models that have thus far been used to examine sect-like religious organizations and new religious movements. In this important work, York carefully considers a number of approaches, ending up with a particular examination of the "concept of SPIN" (Segmented Polycentric Integrated Network). This concept was first proposed by Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine in several articles about the organization of religious groups in particular and contemporary changes

of society in general.¹ Interestingly, York then compares and relates the scientific SPIN-model with a concept evolved from within the New Age by the well-known neopagan witch Starhawk. Starhawk has emphasized the non-hierarchical organizational structures of New Age and Neopaganism and has described them as circular and ever-changing but nevertheless immanent: organizational forming and reforming that constantly happens within the group, rather than is imposed by someone who is the head of and therefore “outside” of the group’s interpersonal dynamics.² Believing the SPIN-model to be “perhaps the most accurate sociological construct applicable to the New Age, Neo-pagan and similar non-institutional, boundary-indeterminate movements” (p. 325), York concludes that SPIN is far more useful for the interpretation of New Age and kindred movements than the classic church-sect dichotomy.

The two most recent books on New Age, written by Paul Heelas (Lancaster, 1996) and Wouter Hanegraaff, both aim at a comprehensive examination and description of New Age. In contrast to Bochinger’s findings, Heelas and Hanegraaff look at New Age as a very real and significant contemporary religion. They have both found their own ways of dealing with diversity within the New Age while still understanding and describing it as essentially one phenomenon. Whereas Hanegraaff’s focus is more historical, Heelas focuses more on the main themes and inner dynamics of New Age as a recent phenomenon. Heelas finds that there is indeed one fundamental topos to the New Age worldview, which can be identified as the centrality of the human self. He has therefore coined the term “self spirituality” as being at the very heart of New Age and Neopagan religiosity. Self spirituality means the sanctification and adoration of an inner essence of the human being that is distinct from his or her social personality. The latter is called “Ego,” which functions basically as an obstacle to spiritual development. Observing that self spirituality has appeared before in the history of religions (e.g. in the Upanishads), Heelas tackles the question of why it is so popular in our era. His approach to this problem is exclusively an anthropological one that does not touch on

¹ Cf. L.P. Gerlach, V.H. Hine, “Five Factors crucial to the Growth and Spread of a Modern religious Movement,” in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 7 (1968), No. 1, 23-40. *People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformations*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill 1968.

² Cf. Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.

recent philosophical concepts, in which the human self is also a prominent object of thought (e.g. Sartre, Lacan). However, supported by anthropological models, Heelas finds various trends of modernity that have finally led to the self as the only reliable source for decision making.

A second major point in Heelas' work is his distinction between "counterculture spirituality" and "prosperity spirituality," both of which ground self spirituality within the New Age. The author's fundamental insights in this regard are certainly indispensable for further research. As the main branch of New Age, counterculture spirituality is constantly changing, however much it may maintain a critical attitude to mainstream values of Western society. In recent years this role has been taken up by Neopaganism, the latter not necessarily regarded as a religion on its own but often as an innovative shift within the New Age. In contrast to counterculture spirituality, prosperity spirituality is more in tune with and receptive to money and power. According to Heelas, its adherents are made up of those who had previously been inclined to counterculture spirituality, but then found a place in and made peace with mainstream society. However, they did not want to lose the spiritual orientation of their lives. For them, self spirituality is synonymous with prosperity spirituality, which provides an opportunity to interpret professional and financial success as a result of their spiritual endeavors. According to Heelas, prosperity spirituality is a new phenomenon, whereas many aspects of counterculture spirituality can be followed back to European Romanticism and North American Transcendentalism. Unfortunately, the newness and originality of prosperity spirituality and its place in recent cultural changes is not given further consideration. Heelas final chapter is devoted to the actual impact of New Age. Openly sympathizing with the movement, Heelas is carefully optimistic about the potential for New Age to change fundamental attitudes of the Western mind. In his view, New Age affects not only the thoughts and actions of small religious communities, but also of society as a whole.

Heelas' contribution to a comprehensive understanding of New Age is valuable, even though it lacks the context of larger historical considerations, which are more fully achieved in Wouter Hanegraaff's voluminous study, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*. As its title implies, the main theme of Hanegraaff's book centers on an inquiry into the historical anchoring of New Age in a Western history of ideas. The study consists of three main parts, the first of which is concerned with the basic phenomenology of the New Age, the second with religious experience in the New Age, and the third

with an interpretation of the New Age in the light of the history of religions. Hanegraaff's subtitle suggests an answer to the question of the origins of New Age: *Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Taking up the designation "Cultic Milieu" that was first introduced by the British Sociologist Colin Campbell, Hanegraaff concludes his treatment of "major trends" of the New Age (in Part One) with definitions of New Age "in sensu stricto" and "in sensu lato". Such a distinction is indeed very useful and even necessary, for the "millenarian vision" that was so prominent in the early Eighties and that defines "New Age in sensu stricto" has lost its meaning for the movement. The term "New Age" cannot be maintained without explanation. However, I find Heelas' solution to this problem more satisfiable. It is the very nature of millenary ideas that they do not last very long. Thus the context in which they emerge seems far more interesting than the belief in the millennium itself. With his reluctance to limit New Age, even "in sensu stricto", to its temporary manifestation as Chiliasm, Heelas has provided the more fruitful basis to classify "revolutionary" New Age (= counterculture spirituality) over and against "conservative" New Age (prosperity spirituality) and to deal with the changeability of both kinds of spirituality, as well as New Age as a whole.

With part two of his study, Hanegraaff presents an almost coherent New Age worldview. Unlike Heelas, who postulates one element of thought as central to the meaning of New Age, Hanegraaff examines and connects New Age tenets to fundamental religious issues like God, ghosts and angels, the cosmos and the position of the human being therein, the meaning of history, good and evil, death and afterlife.

Hanegraaff's findings are fundamentally different from those of Bochinger, who states that nothing like a "nur einigermaßen homogene 'Weltanschauung' oder Ideologie" exists in the New Age world (p. 135). However Bochinger has been led to his conclusions about New Age, Hanegraaff seems to definitively prove the opposite: beyond prominent New Age practices like meditation, Yoga, Tarot and crystal healing, there exists an identifiable and astonishingly coherent outlook on God, the world and the meaning of human life. This kind of perspective provides the means for Hanegraaff, in the third part of his book, to ground a seemingly areligious contemporary religion within a longstanding tradition of religious practices which the author calls "Western Esotericism". With the establishment of this historical line of development, Hanegraaff makes an important contribution to our understanding of New Age as a modern religion.

In his characterization of New Age as a modern expression of a tradition that he names “Western Esotericism”, Hanegraaff thus locates New Age as a third and major world view, one that exists between institutionalized Christianity and the rationality of Enlightenment. Like most other religions in modern times, the esoteric tradition underwent changes caused by secularization. The Esotericists took up the emphasis on individualism from the Enlightenment and combined it with the anti-rationalist impulse from the anti-Enlightenment. They were influenced by the systemic study of religion, through which they were led to build esoteric systems, such as theosophy. Finally, particularly under the influence of Carl G. Jung’s insights, they developed deeply psychologized ideas and thought systems. Inasmuch as Hanegraaff’s historical interpretation of the New Age defines New Age as the continuation of an Esoteric tradition in its most current manifestation, his work is extremely valuable. However, I see an important problem with Hanegraaff’s insistence that “Esotericism” is an entirely Western phenomenon. Research into “Esotericism” is only in its beginnings, but there is a great deal of evidence for its non-Western components and influences. The roots of “Esotericism” are at least as “Oriental”, i.e. Jewish and Egyptian, as they are “Western”. In the case of Neoplatonism, which certainly belongs to the esoteric tradition, even Indian influences should be seriously considered.³ More recently, the deeply spiritual but simultaneously anticlerical attitudes of Leo Tolstoy had an enormous impact on “Western” anti-mainstream religious thinking. Particularly in the beginnings of New Age, we cannot deny the prominence of Neohinduism. Much of the discovery of the “Western esoteric tradition” by New Agers had its beginning in the importation of contemplative techniques of the Indian Gurus to the West.

Esotericism on the whole is not a Western concept, but is prominent in all major religions, and its local expressions are astonishingly universal, both historically and synchronically. This may be the explanation for the worldwide popularity of “exoteric Esotericism” in our era of accelerated globalization. Various scholarly contributions that cannot be discussed here in length have shown that New Age is indeed a global phenomenon,⁴ it is neither an exclusively Western concept, nor does it exist only in the West.

³ Cf. R. Baine Harris (Ed.), *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1982.

⁴ E.g. I.J. Hackett, “New Age Trends in Nigeria: Ancestral and/or Alien Religion,” in Lewis/Melton, *Perspectives on the New Age*, 215-231. M.R. Mullins, “Japan’s

The key to the meaning of the esoteric tradition for New Age is therefore not its Westernism but its globalism. To clarify these matters remains a task for further research.

The five books discussed above have opened up a large new field of study within the history of religions. They have successfully examined various important aspects of the New Age. However what remains to be given extensive consideration is the movement's meaning for contemporary and future cultural developments. To me, the New Age seems to be the first manifestation of a world culture that easily melts traditions taken from previously separated parts of the world. The prominence of religion in this new world culture that follows a seemingly areligious — but regional and comparatively short — period of Modernity is not surprising. It proves once more that religion is one of the most ever-present conditions that shape the nature of human existence. New Age is but its most current and emerging manifestation.

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New Age and Neo-New Religions: Sociological Interpretations," in *ibid.* 232-246. A. Silletta, *La Nueva Era en Argentina. Engaño o crecimiento espiritual?*, Buenos Aires: Beas Ediciones, 1993. Chr. Steyn, *Worldviews in Transition: an Investigation into the New Age Movement in South Africa*, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1994.

BOOK REVIEWS

STEPHEN D. GLAZIER (Ed.), *Anthropology of Religion: A Handbook* — Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press 1997 (542 p.). ISBN 0-313-28351-6 (cloth) £79.95.

The goal of the first volume of this handbook of anthropology of religion is threefold. It wants (1) to be “a reference book intended as a practical guide for professional anthropologists and graduate students preparing to undertake primary research in the anthropology of religion”; (2) “to assemble in one place many of the key findings and methods in the anthropology of religion”; and (3) “to build bridges between anthropologists studying religion and theologians, psychologists, psychiatrists, economists, neurophysiologists, philosophers, political scientists, historians, sociologists, and scholars in the history of religions”.

To realize this threefold goal the handbook contains nineteen articles arranged in four parts. The first part entitled “Looking at Religion Anthropologically” consists of four articles dealing with theoretical and methodological aspects regarding religion. Especially, the first two articles of this part, “Reading ‘Snake handling’: Critical Reflections” by Jim Birckhead, and “The Study of Religion in American Society” by Melinda Bollar Wagner, are very illuminating to those students of religion who are engaged in doing fieldwork. By reading these articles they will become aware of all kinds of problems related to fieldwork, e.g. the question to what extent they have to be committed to the community they are studying.

The second part of the handbook deals with “The Study of Ritual”. After an instructive article presenting an overview of the state of the art of ritual studies, five articles are dedicated to the study of ritual in different communities, viz. Africa, India, Japan, Native North America, and the United States. In the third part of the handbook four articles deal with the phenomenon of “Little and Great Traditions” in four major world religions, viz. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. The authors of the four articles focus on the impact on and interaction with local religious traditions of these so-called great traditions. I was impressed by the way Gregory Starrett in his “The Anthropology of Islam”, and Todd T. Lewis in his “Buddhist Communities: Historical Precedents and Ethnographic Paradigms”

handled the topic. The fourth part of the handbook is entitled "Shamanism and Religious Consciousness". Five in-depth articles discuss shamanism and various types of religious consciousness.

The handbook certainly meets its threefold goal. I like the modesty of most of the articles which, at the same time, are very critical, challenging established opinions and understandings within the anthropology of religion. I can recommend *Anthropology of Religion: A Handbook* to all students of religion as compulsory reading. I am looking forward to the second volume which will be published later this year.

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AXEL MICHAELS (Ed.), *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft. Von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mircea Eliade* — München: C.H. Beck 1997 (427 p.)
ISBN 3-406-42813-4 (cloth) DM 48.00.

At the end of the 20th century, after more than 120 years of scholarly research, the academic study of religions is still in search for its distinct profile within public and scientific discourses. This is due not only to the lack of a precise definition of its very topic but to the fact that *Religionswissenschaft* emerged in connection with various academic disciplines: philosophy, historiography, Christian theology, anthropology, sociology, and psychology all of which laid claim to the investigation of religious phenomena.

Axel Michaels made a virtue of this necessity when he decided which scholar's work was to be named a "classic" of *Religionswissenschaft*. He rightly proposes that "interdisciplinarity is the foundation-stone of the discipline. [...] Thus, to be a classic of *Religionswissenschaft* means to transgress the boundaries of the profession" (p. 12). So it comes with no surprise that we find among the classics not only Nathan Söderblom, Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, but also Sigmund Freud, Max Weber or Aby Warburg. Presenting the life, work and impact of 23 scholars the book presents a caleidoscope of the rich history and complex interdisciplinary efforts of the research into religions.

The fact that the essays are written by leading scholars of the academic study of religions guarantees the high quality of the book. But of equal

importance is the picture the reader gains of contemporary discourses, since the authors do not act as mere administrators of scientific history. They do not hide their own profession and methodological assumptions, thus reflecting the variety of academic branches still active under the name *Religionswissenschaft*. The book shows that this variety is not to be criticized but to be consciously carried on because the ability to work openly and in an interdisciplinary manner will be the demand of the future.

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PETRA PAKKANEN, *Interpreting Early Hellenistic Religion: A Study Based on the Mystery Cult of Demeter and the Cult of Isis*. Papers and Monographs of the Finnish Institute at Athens, vol. 3—Helsinki: Foundation of the Finnish Institute of Athens 1996 (207 p.) ISBN 951-95295-4-3 (pbk.).

At the heart of this study, a revised University of Helsinki dissertation defended in 1995, is a careful and detailed inquiry into two major Athenian cults of the third and second centuries BCE (Part III). Extensive comparison of the two cults follows in Part IV, for a primary goal of the author is to visit scholarly generalizations about Hellenistic religion and to criticize and refine them. When Pakkanen brings the results of her inquiry to bear on such characterizations, the book reaches significant conclusions. Unfortunately, she does not do so consistently (Part V).

The subtitle of the book reveals which two cults Pakkanen examines and one important conclusion she draws. Focus falls on the great Eleusinian mysteries of Demeter (and the Athenian participation in them) and the cult of Isis in Athens and its maritime satellites, Piraeus and Delos. This localized focus enables the author to describe and compare the two cults with precision. The contrasting portraits that result allow her to distinguish the cult of Demeter from that of Isis in a significant way: in the period under consideration the former was a mystery religion but the latter was not. This conclusion represents a noteworthy corrective to scholarship on Isis which tends to take Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* as representative of Isis devotion universally.

Criticism of other generalizations about Hellenistic religion—syncretism, monotheistic trend, individualism, and cosmopolitanism are considered—lacks evenness because Pakkanen does not always apply the results of her Demeter and Isis comparison to them. On the one hand, the author uses information about the Athenian Isis cult to reassess syncretism. The resulting critique leads the reader to a more nuanced understanding of that concept. On the other hand, her comparative inquiry goes relatively untapped in treating the other three generalizations. For instance, the claim that the Hellenistic period saw the rise of individual or personal religion escapes rigorous examination (pp. 112-21), even though the author's earlier inquiry (pp. 49-58) provides a good basis for reevaluation.

Despite its deficiencies, there is much to recommend this study. In addition to the author's fine treatment of mystery religion, the book has thoughtful introductory chapters (Parts I and II), clear organization, useful tables that summarize the text, a good bibliography, and an exhaustive subject index that includes ancient writers and texts and Greek and Latin terms.

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KRISZTINA KEHL-BODROGI, BARBARA KELLNER-HEINKELE and ANKE OTTER-BEAUJEAN (Eds.), *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East. Collected Papers of the International Symposium "Alevism in Turkey and Comparable Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East in the Past and Present", 14-17 April, Berlin 1995*. Studies in the History of Religions (NUMEN Book Series), 76 — Leiden: Brill 1997 (255 p.) ISBN 90 04 10861 0 (cloth) \$100.00.

Since the second half of this century the Turkish Alevites have been through a series of rapid changes. Having experienced a long history of suppression to which they reacted with withdrawal, secrecy, endogamy and religious taboos ensuring a tight social cohesion, Alevites opened up in the fifties, participating in Turkish politics and supporting Kemalism. During the seventies the religious past was shed off altogether and Alevism reinterpreted as the true source of communism. However, the nineties saw religious Alevism reintroduced as an universal religion, accessible to all seekers of human and spiritual values. This also triggered a process of canonization: oral

traditions are now standardized and rendered in writing, religious authorities centralized.

In this highly informative book the editors have brought together scholarly contributions from a wide interdisciplinary range to discuss the Alevite phenomenon. The reader is amply informed on the topic of history, ritual, political options and strategies, social cohesion, religious pursuits and the flux between the oral and the written in different Islamic syncretistic sects. Six articles occupy themselves with the Alevites, seven with similar processes in other syncretistic communities such as the Druzes and the 'Alawi in Lebanon, the Kakai and the Shabak in North-Iraq and the Ahl-i-haqq in Iran. Besides, different theoretical frameworks on syncretism are offered.

In the eyes of the orthodox, adherents of syncretistic beliefs are border violators as these combine features from different religions in such a way that the elements remain recognizable. Thus, the syncretistic Islamic sects wedded pre-Islamic religious lore from Mazdaism and Zoroastrism with the sunni mystical (sufi) path, to which a fair part of shi'ite millenarism (the imminent expectation of a messias) was added. In the 15th. century this made for an explosive mixture of revolutionary potential. The book makes clear that combining different traditions is also an exceedingly dangerous occupation. Syncretistic sects were recognized as 'heretic' and suppressed to the degree of invisibility. Why did these religious minorities insist on their distinctiveness? How did they manage to survive at all?

Due to a combination of factors, such as urbanization in the seventies, resurgent Islamism in the eighties and a series of extreme political situations to which the Lebanese civil war, the Iranian revolution and the Turkish military actions against the Kurds may be counted, the former secret sects have now turned to a more offensive course. Reform of tradition, the proclamation of an open community and the making of converts are among its outcome. It remains an open question whether their flexibility and political adaptability will allow these groups to play a decisive role in Middle Eastern politics. In the meantime, many adherents fled to Europe. Is their religious flexibility also going to be a factor in the readjustment of migrant communities in European countries?

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FRANK J. HOFFMAN and MAHINDA DEEGALLE (Eds.), *Pāli Buddhism* — Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press 1996 (X, 233 p.) ISBN 0-7007-0359-4 (hb.) £40.00.

The present book is a collection of 13 papers from three different areas of research into Pāli Buddhism, brought together with the purpose “to provide something approaching a comprehensive understanding of Pāli Buddhism from an interdisciplinary holistic perspective” (p. 5, introduction by the editors).

The first part called “Philological Foundations” contains papers by G.D. Bond on the ten *sīlas* or aspects of moral conduct, A. Olendzki on the Buddhist concept of liberation, C.G. Chapple on practical implications of *abhidhamma* as well as an article by S. Gopalam comparing the *Dhammapada* with the Tamil work *Tirukkural* by Tiruvalluvar (dated roughly to the beginning of our era by the author).

The second part with the title “Insiders’ Understandings” consists of papers by four scholars from Sri Lanka: on *nirvāṇa* by Mahinda Deegalle, on suicide by Padmasiri de Silva, on rebirth by A.D.P. Kalansuriya and a rather unusual paper by Gunapala Dharmasiri on contradictions of theory and practice in Theravāda tradition (“A Buddhist Critique of Theravāda”).

The third and last part called “Philosophical Implications” tries to combine Buddhist and Western philosophical doctrines and methods. In a rather surprising way, A.L. Herman undertakes to show that two fundamental teachings of Buddhism, viz. the doctrine of the connection between impermanence and pain and the doctrine of *nirvāṇa*, when being subjected to rational critique, appear to be false and “logical inconsistent in the sense that if one dogma is true then the other dogma cannot be true” (p. 159). Retaining them, he argues, would mean “to move Buddhism away from empirical truth . . . or towards a non-rationalism and mysticism where truth is abandoned altogether.” But how can someone exclude that what several people have seen in meditation (which to a large part is the exercise of attentiveness and mental clearness in Buddhism) might also be a form of “empirical truth”? In this sense, Herman’s refutation of the Buddhist *summum bonum* tends to resemble the attempts to prove or to disprove the existence of God in Western philosophy — and might turn out to be as useless as they were in terms of religious “truth”. To have raised this question with philosophical acuteness is nevertheless a merit of the author.

The other papers of this part deal with Dependent Origination (Rama-krishna Puligandla), Theravāda Buddhism in the light of Process Philosophy (one paper by Shanta Ratnayaka and another by Ninian Smart) and with "orientalism" (as described by Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1978) in Buddhology, the latter paper being a very useful attempt by Frank J. Hoffman to trace "Western preunderstandings in understanding Buddhism" (p. 207).

As a whole, the book is a very useful and interesting presentation of contemporary research into Pāli Buddhism which offers some new results as well as challenging basic material for the interdisciplinary discussion for which it was also written.

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JOHN R. HINNELLIS, *Zoroastrians in Britain. The Ratanbai Katrak Lectures*,
University of Oxford 1985. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996 (xv + 336 p.)
ISBN 0-19-826193-4.

Diaspora studies have become fashionable. The bibliography on diaspora communities is immense. New papers and books are published almost every week. It is therefore a pity that it took John Hinnells, who is currently holding a research professorship at the University of Derby, more than a decade to publish a part of his Ratanbai Katrak Lectures, given at the University of Oxford in 1985.

This extremely well-researched book is divided into seven chapters which are rather different in shape and in the methodology employed. The book has an index¹ and a glossary of some 72 key Zoroastrian terms.²

¹ Page references are sometimes incomplete.

² This glossary is quite useful. I would, however, at least like to point to two wrong definitions: 'Ervad' is not so much "the title for a functioning priests" (p. 322)—by the way an odd expression—but for a man who "belongs to a priestly class and has gone through the first degree of priesthood," J.J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsee*, 2nd Edition, Bombay: Jehangir B. Karani's Sons, 1937, pp. 360-361. Moreover, the 'Parthians' are definitely not "the rulers of Iran from the second century BCE to the third century CE" (p. 323). These were the 'Arsacides.'

In the Introduction (pp. 1-49) Hinnells gives a brief overview of Zoroastrian history,³ the history of Asians in Britain and a short clarification of terminology (commenting on terms like “race,” “ethnicity,” “community” and “diaspora”).

The second and shortest chapter (pp. 50-76) is entitled “Zoroastrian Perspectives on Contacts with the British.”⁴ It discusses the different experiences of different Zoroastrian communities in Asia (Iran, Pakistan, India) and East Africa in their home countries prior to their migration to Britain. This perspective seems important since, in Hinnells’ words, few, “if any, other British South Asian communities have experienced such a profound interaction between their own religion and that of the British before their migration to the UK” (p. 76).

This chapter moreover contains an interesting section, (inaccurately) entitled “British-Zoroastrian Religious Interaction” (pp. 67-74) outlining the background and ideas of the main Zoroastrian theologians (e.g., M.N. Dhalla,⁵ J.J. Modi, Kh. Mistree) who exercise some influence on Zoroastrians in Britain.⁶ Hinnells rightly observes “that there is a high level of interaction between western, indeed British, scholarship, the Bombay community, and the Zoroastrians in Britain” (p. 74; see also pp. 285, 294). Hinnells, however, omits—and this is in my eyes a very serious defect in Hinnells’ reflections throughout the book—his own personal involvement in Zoroastrian community affairs. Hinnells is indeed a well-known figure among (Parsi) Zoroas-

³ This overview is a slightly modified summary of the views of his teacher Mary Boyce. Hinnells draws a rather homogenous picture of Zoroastrianism ignoring or implicitly denying its plurality. Quite often it remains unclear if the reasons given for certain Zoroastrian ideas or actions are those of the author or of Zoroastrians.

⁴ There is no chapter on British perspectives on contacts with Zoroastrians.

⁵ According to Hinnells “Dhalla did lecture in Britain on occasions, and taught some of the community leaders in the 1970s” (p. 70). I wonder how this was possible given the fact that Dastur Dhalla died in 1956! Surprisingly, in the whole of his book, Hinnells does not mention that Dhalla in his autobiography (listed in Hinnells’ bibliography!) claims to have performed the very first initiation-rite (*navjote*) in Britain, see *Dastur Dhalla. The Saga of a Soul. An Autobiography of Shams-ul-Ulama Dastur Dr. Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla...*, Karachi: Dastur Dhalla Memorial Institute, 1975, pp. 368-369. This book contains also other interesting informations on the Zoroastrians in Britain that Hinnells does not use.

⁶ Here, Hinnells surprisingly makes no reference to the writings of Dr. Ali Jafarey.

trians worldwide, exercising some influence, e.g., through personal contacts, lectures and his popular books on Zoroastrianism.⁷ Both editions of the *Directory of Zoroastrians of U.K. & Europe* (first edition 1991; second edition 1994) contain letters of felicitation by Hinnells! The book under review is dedicated to two Zoroastrian priests and Hinnells is, at least, in part writing for a Zoroastrian audience.⁸ This is of course only legitimate, and the fact that Hinnells does not consider Zoroastrians merely as an 'object' of his studies shines through much of his writing. Hinnells is working as much *with* as *on* Zoroastrians. The affection Hinnells has for the community with which he is working shines through many of his pages. This is again very legitimate. In my eyes, however, Hinnells should have made this aspect of his work more explicit. According to my information, Hinnells was instrumental in the establishment of the North West Zoroastrian Community founded in 1987 in Manchester (where at that time Hinnells was living). In the short passage of his book dealing with that particular association (pp. 149-150), however, Hinnells doesn't mention his own contribution with a single word. Is this only a question of modesty?

The third chapter is dealing with the first Zoroastrian arrivals to Britain (pp. 77-106). Here, Hinnells shortly refers to the case of the first Zoroastrian to touch British soil (Naoroji Rustomji, as early as in 1724!). According to Hinnells, no "other Zoroastrian is known to have visited Britain until the nineteenth century" (p. 79),⁹ when Parsis came to the UK mainly

⁷ In a footnote (p. 260, note 5) Hinnells remarks rather innocently: "I am told that the 'bestsellers' are Boyce, 1984 and esp. 1975; Hinnells, 1981 and 1985b, i.e., books by outsiders."

⁸ The book has been reviewed in Zoroastrian journals. The reviewer for the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* is a Zoroastrian, too.

⁹ Unfortunately, Hinnells does not discuss the following passage from H.G. Briggs, *The Pársis; or, Modern Zerdushtians. A Sketch*. Bombay: Andrew Dunlop 1852, p. 91: "this is only casually noticed in an edition of 'Edmund Burke's Life and Writings.' Maníar, a Pársí, accompanied by Haníman, a Hindu, appear to have... visited England as the agents of Bái Ráu the Peshwá. They lived during the year 1781 at Beaconsfield, the residence of the illustrious English statesman... Both Pársí and Hindu appear to have suffered severely during the winter. They returned to India in the course of the following year. The Peshwá's letter to Mr. Burke has never been traced, but the statesman's communication in reply favorably names both his Indian acquaintances... This Maníar, the Pársí, belonged to the Mancharjí Shet family, of Surat... The present

for education, to learn about and purchase technical equipment and for business. These early arrivals formed a “prototype Zoroastrian community in Britain” (p. 87) consisting not only of westernized liberals but also of traditionalists who kept a certain distance from their environment. The next section is an interesting analysis of 19th century Parsi travellers’ diaries (pp. 88-97). The Parsis’ admiration for the technical civilization they encountered did not prevent some of them making critical remarks directed against Parliament and Christianity. The last section of the third chapter gives an account of the literature on Zoroastrianism western-educated and westernized Parsis produced for a British audience (pp. 97-102). This literature presents Zoroastrianism as a value-system in fundamental accord with western civilization and Christianity.

The fourth chapter is entitled “A Century of Zoroastrian Associations in Britain (1860s-1960s)” (pp. 107-154). The first Zoroastrian association in Britain was founded in 1861. According to Hinnells it “was the first Asian religious association founded in Britain” (p. 107). The interesting chapter is mainly based on the records of this association and other associations, institutions and clubs that have been formed later (e.g., the Parsi Social Union, the London Funeral Ground, the World Zoroastrian Association and some local associations).¹⁰ A separate section discusses the London associations’ attempts at easing the conditions for their co-religionists in Iran (pp. 111-114).¹¹ Already in the early history of the association Hinnells identifies

members of the family merely remember his voyage to Europe.” In the following passage Briggs mentions a recent traveller who is not mentioned by Hinnells, either. On Maniar see also D.F. Karaka, *History of the Parsis Including their Manners, Customs, Religion, and Present Condition*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1884, vol. II, pp. 42-43. During their stay in England, the Parsi and the Hindu seemed to have faced certain problems since they continued to respect certain ritual prescriptions of their respective religions.

¹⁰ Hinnells mentions in passing the responsibility of the London Association for a burial ground in Berlin (p. 132). Here I miss a reference to the discussion of that problem by S.F. Desai, *History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet 1860-1960*. Bombay: Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties, n.d., pp. 196-197 (describing things from a different angle).

¹¹ Unfortunately, Hinnells omits reference to a letter by Keikoshrow Shahrokh addressed to Bhownagree, the leading figure among Zoroastrians in Britain, dated 24th October, 1919. Here the Iranian unequivocally laments: “Perhaps you are aware

discussions that have become epidemic in later stages of the development of Zoroastrian diasporas: the problems of burial practices and the attendance of non-Zoroastrians at Zoroastrian funerals. The question "who authorizes what in the Zoroastrian world" (p. 109) arose at an early date and has not been solved yet. This problem may even have become more apparent in recent years due to the internationalization of the association whose membership nowadays consists of Zoroastrians from India, Iran, Pakistan and East Africa whereas it was purely Indian (= Parsi) in the beginning. As a recurrent pattern of all the British Zoroastrian organizations Hinnells identifies "the Zoroastrian sense of distinctiveness" (p. 153) resulting in very few contacts with other South Asian groups in Britain and an emphasis on the Zoroastrians' 'Persian heritage.' Hinnells does not discuss how the associations and Zoroastrianism in general are financed in Britain. He rarely comments on election procedures and the competence of the associations' different offices (e.g., of the president). In a certain way—and this brings me back to the general criticism raised above—Hinnells shares with the Zoroastrians' own historiography a tendency to emphasize the glory of the good old days. While discussing the leadership of the early stages of the association at quite some length, Hinnells contents himself with rather few and general remarks on the dominant personalities since the 1930s. These remarks, moreover, clearly show a tendency to harmonize history by downplaying the awful conflicts waging between different persons and groups, even resulting in the 'disappearance' of materials and in legal action. Hinnells' tendency to cloak these bitter aspects of reality in ambivalent wording or outright silence is a direct consequence of his having a Zoroastrian audience in mind, his unwillingness to comment on his own involvement in Zoroastrian community affairs and finally his concern not to risk the future of his work with and on Zoroastrianism. Again, this is fully understandable but in my eyes he should at some point have made this tendency explicit.

The fourth and longest chapter of the book discusses "Zoroastrians in British Politics" (pp. 155-226). Because of their small numbers Zoroastrians,

that in the last three to four years the Persians have passed through miserable times... Even the Jews of America remitted [monies] for their co-religionists... Mohammedans helped their brothers and sisters, but... Not a single penny was sent to help the poor Zoroastrians by their co-religionists outside Persia," *The Memoirs of Keikoshrow Shahrokh*, edited and translated by Shahrokh Shahrokh and Rashna Writer. Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994, pp. 185-186.

unlike other South Asian groups in Britain, have never constituted a significant electoral group. The first three Asians to become Members of Parliament, however, were all Parsis (belonging to different political parties!). It therefore seems appropriate that Hinnells dedicates a rather long chapter on the political careers and activities of these early Zoroastrian politicians: Dadabhoy Naoroji (MP 1892-1895), Muncherji Bhownagree (MP 1895-1905) and Shapurji Saklatvala (MP 1922-1923 and 1924-1929). Hinnells is here mostly working on the records of the parliamentary debates but he also uses documents from the Zoroastrian association. As a result he observes that previous research had partly oversimplified assessments of these politicians (especially Bhownagree). Moreover, Hinnells describes the political career of Zerbanoo Gifford (*1950) who has not become an MP (yet).¹² Surprisingly, he does not comment on the fact that half a century has elapsed between Saklatvala's last term at Westminster and the beginnings of Gifford's campaign (mostly for women's rights and racial equality). Moreover, I wonder why Hinnells fails to mention the Labour politician and social worker Tehmtan Framroze, who is deputy mayor and former mayor of Brighton.

The fifth chapter is entitled "British Zoroastrians Approaching the Third Millennium" (pp. 227-278). Unlike the preceding chapters this part of the book under review makes use of 'empirical' (quantitative and qualitative) methods. It is based on a survey questionnaire (circulated in 1985, i.e., more than ten years ago), more than 300 in-depth interviews (conducted in 1986-1987, i.e., more than ten years before the book has been published)¹³ and many close personal contacts ('participant observation'). Hinnells gives a broad demographic picture (pp. 230-233) and discusses "Religion and a Sense of Identity" (pp. 233-235) containing some interesting observations (e.g., that for "many interviewees their identity was not expressed in terms of being British, or Indian or Parsi, but in ultimately being the true Persians—whichever continent they may have been born in" (p. 235)). Another section is dealing with "Zoroastrians and the British" (pp. 235-238). Here Hinnells

¹² Hinnells does not mention that Z. Gifford has an Irani-Zoroastrian background. This makes an important difference to the three MPs.

¹³ Hinnells' research assistant had in the meanwhile published her own version of things, see R. Writer, *Contemporary Zoroastrians. An Unstructured Nation*. Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1994. The book has been very poorly reviewed by J. Russell in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* III (6) (1996), 110-111.

discusses questions such as experience of racial prejudice—in London 42% of the Zoroastrians said they had faced prejudice (mostly in education)!—and friendships with whites. Moreover, the author found “a consistent pattern of Zoroastrians considering themselves to be the equals of Europeans and superior to other races, notably Muslims, Hindus, other Asians, and the Black African community” (p. 238).¹⁴ Another section discusses the question “Does being Zoroastrian Conflict with being British?” (pp. 238-241). Among other things, Hinnells here observes that the Zoroastrians’ sense of self-identity often is expressed in negatives (e.g., *not* Indian, *not* Muslim). The following sections contain useful distinctions (e.g., between the different countries of birth and the sense of identity, different generations, gender issues,¹⁵ etc.) preventing over-simplifying statements (pp. 241-250). The important question of intermarriage is dealt with in a different section (pp. 250-255) containing an analysis of different groups’ attitudes to intermarriage, different groups of mixed marriages but also of the problems arising from the immense communal pressure on the couples and their parents. Three sections are concerned with the transmission of that what Hinnells (in the footsteps of his teacher, Mary Boyce) likes to call ‘the tradition.’ Apart from discussing the social aspects of this ‘tradition’ (food, theatre etc.), he is dealing with religious education and publications on Zoroastrianism. A long section deals with religious practice (mainly the performance of rituals and their interpretation). A last section comments on local differences in different British associations (e.g., between London and Manchester) and compares the British Zoroastrians’ religious ideas and practices with other Zoroastrian diaspora communities (pp. 272-275). In his conclusion to the sixth chapter Hinnells among other things distinguishes between different factors which affect “the extent and ways in which people assimilate or preserve the tradition.”¹⁶ their country of origin, their date of arrival, their gender and

¹⁴ Hinnells is here obviously caught in the trap of his informants: Zoroastrians consider Muslims primarily as “Arabs,” in a historical sense, however, Muslims do hardly constitute a ‘race’!

¹⁵ In this case, however, Hinnells in my eyes draws a much too harmonious and positive picture of gender-relations in Zoroastrianism. For a more refined picture see K. Gould, “Outside the Disciplin, Inside the Experience.” In: *Religion and Women*, A. Sharma (ed.). Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 139-182.

¹⁶ I find this wording revealing: Is this really the one and only alternative? Moreover, I wonder if tradition (contrary to Boyce’s and Hinnells’ ‘*the tradition*’) not

status, whom they met, etc. Finally, however, as a true pupil of Mary Boyce, Hinnells emphasizes “the very strong element of continuity in the lives of most Zoroastrians” (p. 277).

The seventh chapter is more than just a “Conclusion” (pp. 279-310) in that it, e.g., highlights a certain revival of religious interest among Zoroastrians in the 1990’s (pp. 290-291).¹⁷ Hinnells is to be applauded for the courage to discuss what he sees as the “gaps and failings” of his own research (pp. 308-309). In the “Conclusion” Hinnells tries to position Zoroastrianism in the recent discussion on diaspora religions. As typical diaspora features he stresses trends towards internationalization and institutionalization of the religion (pp. 292-294). A separate section compares Zoroastrians to other ‘South Asian’ religions in Britain (pp. 296-302). This reveals similarities and differences, e.g., a different demographic profile with smaller families, more (and more intensely debated) intermarriage, different gendering, higher education, practically no unemployment, few manual-workers and quite a different type of leadership which is western-educated, professional, secular and open to influences from British society. As particular problems facing the community Hinnells sees the Zoroastrians’ demographic crisis, limited resources of funding and ‘personal power,’ a small market for religious products and finally a certain vulnerability to journalistic mockery and social marginality.¹⁸ A comparison of a different kind is with the Jews (pp. 302-304).¹⁹ Proceeding from his research on Zoroastrians, Hinnells tries to extend the five factors which affect the development (or preservation) of a religion in migration suggested by Kim Knott to a bundle of ten factors: Where people come from; how the British are perceived prior to migration to Britain; why people migrate; what people were before migration; when they migrated; who

always is assimilating in some way or other? How is tradition to be ‘preserved’ without being assimilated? Finally, Hinnells himself in a different context opts to describe Zoroastrianism in Britain as ‘syncretistic’ (pp. 295-296)!

¹⁷ I cannot but disagree with Hinnells’ sweeping statement that “Zoroastrians had always had a strong sense of history” (p. 280).

¹⁸ I am not quite sure if I can agree with these last arguments.

¹⁹ This comparison has some interesting aspects but also some points that I find highly problematic (e.g., that Hinnells draws a parallel between the ‘persecution’ of the Zoroastrians in Iran and the holocaust!). Significantly, the institutional aspects of religion (priesthood, temples/synagogues, financial organisation) are faded out in this comparison.

they migrate with; where they migrate to; what they do after migration; who they are (gender, economic activities etc.), and external factors like prejudice (pp. 305-307). This seems a rather reasonable scheme. The final section of the book discusses “The Future for British Zoroastrians,” i.e., Zoroastrians in Britain (pp. 309-310). Ultimately, Hinnells’ conclusion is optimistic: “the indicators at the end of the second millennium are that there will continue to be a living history of Zoroastrians in Britain” (p. 310). Let’s hope so.

John Hinnells’ book is a major contribution to research on Zoroastrianism. It seems equally important for diaspora studies. It is to be hoped that it will not take the author another 10 years to publish the second product of the Katrak lectures, i.e., the book(s) on the global Zoroastrian diaspora.

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TIELE ON RELIGION

ARIE L. MOLENDIJK

Summary

This essay explores C.P. Tieles concept of religion. After a sketch of his place in early Dutch science of religion (I), an outline is given of the main theme in Tieles discussion of religion — the relationship between outside (“dogma and ritual”) and inside (“inner conviction”) (II). The most voluminous part of the essay (III) elaborates on this topic by giving a detailed analysis of Tieles Gifford Lectures. The structure of this *magnum opus* is unravelled, which enables one to better discern the different angles from which Tiele approached his subject matter. The metaphor of outside manifestations, which reveal the inner core, enabled him to locate religion “in the inmost depths of our souls”. He claims that religion is ultimately a psychological phenomenon; its essence is “piety”. We owe this insight to the new science of religion, which also shows that the religious need is the “mightiest” and most profound of all human needs.

I. Introduction

Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830-1902) is generally recognized as being one of the main architects of the science of religion in the second half of the nineteenth century. From the very beginning there has been a discussion about the question concerning who actually founded this new discipline.¹ The most obvious candidates were the Oxford Sanskritist Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), who advocated in his “Chips from a German Workshop” that the new science would “change the aspect of the world”², on the one hand, and the Dutchman Tiele, who occupied from 1877 onwards the first Leiden chair in History of Religions, on the other. The foremost early historian of the field,

¹ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1887-1889, Part I: 5; Chantepie de la Saussaye 1902: 91; Kristensen 1899; Jordan 1905: 150-156, 521-523; cf. Sharpe 1986: 35; Waardenburg 1973-1974.

² Müller 1867: XX.

Louis Henry Jordan, went to great lengths to refute the claim that Müller was the father of Comparative Religion, as the discipline is often called.³ Tiele himself dealt with the controversial issue in a paper read at the famous Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893.⁴ He finally discarded the question by stating that a new branch of study can hardly be said to be founded. "Like others, this one was called into being by a generally felt want in different countries at the same time and as a matter of course".⁵ The sense of being involved in a scientific enterprise that transcended national boundaries was indeed strong at the time. Conversely, its international character, as manifest in "World Congresses", stimulated an awareness of the own, national contribution to the new field.

Within the Dutch context Tiele was — or, at least, considered himself to be — the *primus inter pares*. The patronizing kindness with which he reviewed the famous "Manual of the History of Religion" of his younger colleague Pierre Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye (1848-1920) is a fine example of this self-consciousness.⁶ In the penetrating necrology, written for the Dutch Academy of Sciences, Chantepie de la Saussaye spoke of the distance that existed between Tiele and himself. Of course, he mentioned the international prestige Tiele enjoyed — from all over the world it resounded "*tu Duca, tu Signore, e tu Maestro*" — but only after having pointed to the fact that Tiele had no pupils in the Netherlands. He also referred to Tiele's sensitive, not to say hypersensitive, nature, and to the high — in Chantepie de la

³ Jordan 1905: 521-523. I will not go into terminological niceties here, important as they may be; for the sake of convenience, I will use "science of religion" as a covering term for the new field in all its ramifications. This does not imply that there existed (or, for that matter, exists) a consensus about the name or the content of this scholarly endeavour. Many other terms, like science of religions, history of religion, history of religions, philosophy of religion, phenomenology of religion, psychology of religion, hierology, and hierography, were used. Terminology was not fixed, and the relationship between the various branches was a matter of discussion.

⁴ Cf. Ziolkowski 1993; Seager 1995.

⁵ Tiele 1893: 586.

⁶ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1887-1889; Tiele 1888-1889.

Saussaye's view over-optimistic and unfounded — expectations Tiele had with respect to the new field.⁷ Tiele hoped that the new science would pave the way for a new religious awakening that would do away with any sort of ecclesiastical oppression.⁸

In this view science of religion could have a practical impact and could be used for a new religious education. Hence, it is no coincidence that Tiele published his first attempt in the new field, titled "Something on pre-Christian Religions", in the "Christian Popular Almanac" which he edited with his friend, the famous Dutch poet, P.A. de Génestet.⁹ Both were at the time ministers in the "Remonstrant Brotherhood", a small, upper class Protestant Church. Tiele was to a large extent an autodidact in science of religion; he mastered old languages, such as Persian and Assyrian, in his Rotterdam parsonage. He had started his scholarly career in the 1850s with two books on the Gospel of John. He argued that it offered useful historical insight into the life of Jesus and that as a historical document it was to be preferred over against other New Testament writings, not so much because it contained more reliable facts, but because the Fourth Gospel portrayed the overall historical picture better than the other sources.¹⁰ His first major contribution to the emerging science of religion was his book on "The Religion of Zarathustra".¹¹ From the late 1870s onwards many of his articles and books were translated into the major European languages. His "Outlines of the History of Religion" (1877), originally published in Dutch in 1876, went through five editions till 1892; and the German translation, revised and enlarged after Tiele's death by the Swedish scholar Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931)¹² was up to the Second World War one of the most influential handbooks

⁷ Chantepie de la Saussaye 1902.

⁸ Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 261-263.

⁹ Tiele 1856. Tiele, who published some poetry himself (Tiele 1863), edited the collected poems of his friend, who died at the early age of 32; cf. De Génestet 1871.

¹⁰ Tiele 1853 and 1855.

¹¹ Tiele 1864.

¹² On Söderblom, see Sharpe 1990.

in German-speaking countries. The book is explicitly construed as a history of religion (singular), and not as a history of religions. “The history of religion is not content with describing special religions (*hierography*), or with relating their vicissitudes and metamorphoses (the history of religions); its aim is to show how religion, considered generally as the relation between man and the superhuman powers in which he believes, has developed in the course of ages among different nations and races, and, through these, in humanity at large”.¹³ The presupposition of a unity of religions of all ages and places justified an interrelated study of them.

Tiele not only made significant contributions to the science of religion¹⁴, he also was an ardent advocate of it. His first battle cry was a devastating critique of the teachings of Jan Hendrik Scholten (1811-1885), the grand Leiden master of modern theology, who was at the time at the height of his prestige.¹⁵ This did not prevent Tiele from speaking of “unwarranted statements” and “insufficient concepts” with regard to Scholten’s outline of “History of Religion”.¹⁶ In an ironic phrasing, Tiele wrote that for one moment he even had thought that the book was a joke to test how far the stupidity of the Dutch in the field of the history of religion would go.¹⁷ After this review it is a small miracle that Scholten would later accept Tiele’s appointment at the Leiden Theological Faculty. Tiele had started his campaign in the 1860s and pleaded for a complete transformation of theology into science of religion, which in his view would be able to fulfil the major tasks of the old theology in a scientific way. However, there was no majority for this option in Parliament. Yet, after a long, ten

¹³ Tiele 1877a: 1f. (italics in the original).

¹⁴ For a list of Tiele’s main publications, see Waardenburg 1973-1974, Vol. II: 282-286; cf. De Ridder 1900b. For biographical information, cf. Kristensen 1899; De Ridder 1900a; Réville 1902; Van der Vlugt 1902; Chantepie de la Saussaye 1902; Cossee 1993.

¹⁵ On Scholten, see Roessingh 1914: 105-131; Rasker 1981: 115-118.

¹⁶ Scholten 1859: 1-16. The French translation was by Albert Réville (1826-1906). On the Dutch-French connection in early science of religion, see Cabanel 1994.

¹⁷ Tiele 1860: 816.

year period of debate a new Act on Higher Education was passed in 1876 which introduced two new disciplines into the theological curriculum: "History of Religions in General" and "Philosophy of Religion". These were in Tiele's view the twin branches of science of religion. His Leiden inaugural lecture of October 10, 1877 on the meaning of Assyriology for the comparative history of religions marked the institutional beginning in the history of the field of the Dutch university system.¹⁸

Although Tiele was doubtless a towering figure in the new science, he was only one of the many Dutch scholars who explored this area in the second half of the nineteenth century. The present article does not aim at a full discussion of these developments¹⁹; rather, it has the more modest purpose to examine Tiele's conceptualization of religion. In what ways did Tiele frame "religion"? What concepts and metaphors were used to establish that religion "dwells in the inmost depths of our souls"? And last but not least: What role was science of religion supposed to play in all this?

II. The Location of Religion

The aim of his work, according to Tiele in his contribution "Religions" to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which was edited by the Old Testament Scholar and Anthropologist of Religion William Robertson Smith (1846-1894)²⁰, is not to "satisfy a vain curiosity", but — and I will give this important quote in full:

to understand and explain one of the mightiest motors in the history of mankind, which formed as well as tore asunder nations, united as well as divided empires, which sanctioned the most atrocious and barbarous deeds, the most cruel and libidinous customs, and inspired the most admirable acts of heroism, self-renunciation, and devotion, which occasioned the most sanguinary wars, rebellions, and persecutions, as well as brought about the freedom, happiness, and peace of nations — at one time a partisan of tyranny, at another breaking its

¹⁸ Tiele 1877b.

¹⁹ More information is offered in Molendijk 1998.

²⁰ On Robertson Smith, see Rogerson 1995.

chains, now calling into existence and fostering a new and brilliant civilization, then the deadly foe to progress, science, and art.²¹

With rhetorical skill and even pleasure, so it seems, Tiele sketched out the enormous impact of religion on political, social, and cultural life. Especially the potentially devastating effects of the exercise of power, reinforced by religion, seem to have fascinated Tiele, although he did not neglect the possible benefactory effects of religion. This is not a thing of the remote past. On the contrary, the so-called World Religions — Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam — appeared rather late in religious history, and their aim, in contrast to the old national religions, is “to conquer all mankind”. Religion and power are perceived as closely connected with each other. “The revolution brought about by religious universalism is the greatest and most complete which the history of the world can show; all others, political or social, are as nothing compared to this”.²² Undoubtedly, the formulations betray a romantic vision of power and heroism, but they also clearly show that Tiele did not overlook the effects of religion upon general history.

By using the metaphor of a “mighty motor”, he framed the relation between religion, on the one hand, and cultural and socio-political history, on the other hand, in terms of inside and outside. This apparently inner affair between human beings and their gods can yield enormous outer effects. Also, Tiele did not deny that political and religious history are to some extent mixed up with each other, as is shown even by the titles of several of his books: “The Religion of Zarathustra... Till the Fall of the Old Persian Empire”, and “History of Ancient Religion Up Till Alexander the Great”.²³ His “Babylonian-Assyrian History”²⁴ is even mainly political history, the discussion of religion playing only a secondary role in the part on Babylonian-Assyrian culture. But this is an exception in Tiele’s writings, which on

²¹ Tiele 1886: 358.

²² Tiele 1882a: XXI.

²³ Tiele 1864; Tiele 1893-1901.

²⁴ Tiele 1886-1888.

the whole deal with specific religious phenomena, specific religions, and, last but not least, with religion as such.

This focus on religion as such or, as Tiele would have preferred to say, on the essence and origin of religion²⁵, does not imply a disinterest in the different manifestations of this particular cultural form. He spent a lot of time on developing classifications of religions.²⁶ This endeavour, however, is complicated by Tiele's wish to present at the same time a developmental scheme. Or, more accurately, one type of classification (morphological) represents in itself stages of development. This attempt at diachronic classification gave rise to extensive and confusing discussions, among others between Tiele and his Utrecht colleague J.I. Doedes, and the Berlin philosopher Otto Pfleiderer.²⁷ I will restrict myself to the crucial problem at stake here. According to the position defended by Tiele, phenomena that occur, strictly spoken, *later* in the course of history can represent, morphologically spoken, *earlier* phases of development of religion as such. This point of view was not acceptable to all his colleagues. According to some critics, this kind of "history" (concerning religion as such) had nothing to do with "real" religious history. History, as practised by Tiele, was said to be a means to an end, and not an end in itself as it should be.²⁸ In spite of this criticism, Tiele remained convinced that the history of religion (in the singular) lies hidden within the history of religions (in the plural).

Notwithstanding the importance accorded to historical investigation — Tiele even said of himself: "I am nothing if not historical"²⁹ — science of religion strives, in the end, at comparison and classification. To do this adequately, one has to distinguish — Tiele wrote in his

²⁵ Tiele 1871.

²⁶ On the influential distinction between theanthropic and theocratic religions (cf. Tiele 1886, 1897-1899, Part I, Lecture 6), see Kippenberg 1997: 77-79.

²⁷ Doedes 1874; Pfleiderer 1875; Tiele 1874a, 1874b, 1875. In a later phase Tiele modified his views on this topic; cf. Tiele 1886: 367.

²⁸ Kern 1877: 372.

²⁹ A variation on Abraham Kuenen's famous dictum: "I am nothing if not critical"; cf. Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 17.

contribution on “Religions” to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* — “two prominent constitutive elements [of religion], ... religious ideas and religious practices”.³⁰ Such ideas may be vague or unsystematic, but, for Tiele, there exists no “living religion without something like a doctrine”. Yet, a doctrine alone does not make up a religion. “Scarcely less than by its leading ideas a religion is characterized by its rites and institutions...” Given the great importance Tiele attached from the outset to research on religious ideas instead of the study of rituals and religious practices, it is remarkable that in this statement practices receive nearly (“scarcely less”) the same rank as ideas. Tiele even went so far as to speak of “the hitherto much neglected comparative study of religious worship and of ethics”. This favourable assessment could be related to the fact that Robertson Smith, who was on his way to argue for the priority of ritual over myth, had invited Tiele to write this article. Smith’s letters to Tiele concerning the *Encyclopaedia* article, however, do not show any discussion of this topic.³¹ Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that Tiele, while preparing his article, consciously or subconsciously had an audience in mind, familiar with British anthropology of religion.

Having reminded his readers of the fact that the two main elements of religion hardly ever balance each other, so that pre-eminently doctrinal religions have to be distinguished from more ritualistic and ethical ones, Tiele’s exposition took a striking turn:

Not that dogma and ritual are religion; they are only its necessary manifestations, the embodiment of what must be considered as its very life and essence, of that which as an inner conviction must be distinguished from a doctrine or creed — a belief.³²

³⁰ Tiele 1886: 358. The following quotations are taken from the same page.

³¹ The letters are kept in the Tiele Collection of the Leiden University Library, under the signature BPL 2710. In a letter of October 23, 1893, in which Smith expressed his thanks for the “new book” (probably Tiele 1893-1901, volume I) Tiele had sent him, he touched upon this difference of opinion: “for my own part I am inclined to think that you give too great prominence to *gods*, while you on the other hand will think that I give too much prominence to *institutions*” (emphasis in the original).

³² Tiele 1886: 358. The following quotations are taken from the same page.

The switch here is from the outside (“manifestations”) to the inside (“inner conviction”, “belief”). Apparently, only by studying the manifestations can we get to know the inside that brings about those outer phenomena. Without researching religious ideas and practices, “we cannot get a knowledge of the belief which lies at the base of a particular doctrine and which prompts peculiar rites and acts”. In this context it is hard to understand what he was aiming at since he did not specify the content of the “belief”. On later occasions he dropped the term and spoke instead of “religious sentiment”³³ as being at the heart of religion. It is for certain, however, that this basic belief is not to be confused with creeds, doctrines, or religious concepts. It concerns the way the relationship with the divine is structured. The essence of religion was described in various ways (perhaps not all of them consistent with each other) throughout his writings. Instead of a full, “werkgeschichtliche” investigation of Tiele’s development, I will give in the following an analysis of his mature views as present in the Gifford Lectures.

III. The Gifford Lectures

1. Outside-Inside

After having been obliged to reject an earlier invitation to give the Gifford Lectures³⁴ because of his recent appointment as Rector of the University of Leiden (1892-1893), Tiele was happy to accept a second invitation. He was attracted, he stated, by the prospect of presenting his views on science of religion before a broad public.³⁵ The Lectures, delivered in 1896 and 1898, were attended by large audiences. They were even a media event: Tiele’s voyage to Scotland was covered daily by some of the main Dutch newspapers, and his arrival and activities also attracted large attention from British and Scottish dailies and magazines. Nonetheless, Tiele had not been able to perform his task to his own entire satisfaction. The main problem

³³ Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 35; cf. Tiele 1871: 389!

³⁴ On the Gifford Lectures, see Jaki 1986.

³⁵ Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: VII.

he faced was that he had to speak before a heterogeneous audience in a language he was not fully acquainted with. The translation of the Lectures caused some trouble, because Tiele "emended" William Hastie's translation considerably. The conflict over the translation led to a lawsuit started by Hastie³⁶, and ended, eventually, in a new translation by Tiele's friend J. Kirkpatrick. The Lectures were finally published in two volumes, in English under the title "Elements of the Science of Religion"³⁷, and in Dutch and other languages as an "Introduction to the Science of Religion".

Tiele did not burden the book with references and footnotes; he considered it to be a more or less popular introduction, and not a handbook. Probably the original Dutch title was not, or could not, be used for the English edition, because there already existed an "Introduction" with the same name which was written by his famous colleague Max Müller. This book was a permanent point of reference, not to say target, for Tiele. Müller, according to Tiele, necessarily dealt with preliminaries in 1873, but now, 25 years later, science of religion was a more or less established discipline that could offer actual results. Tiele emphasized the philosophical part, or even character, of the new science, and reduced the place of history within the science of religion, properly spoken, to a minimum:

Historical research must precede and pave the way for our science; but it does not belong to it. If I have minutely described all the religions in existence, their doctrines, myths, customs, the observances they inculcate, and the organisation of their adherents, besides tracing the different religious forms, their origin, bloom, and decay, I have merely collected the materials with which the science of religion works. And, indispensable as this is, it is not enough. Anthropology or the science of man, sociology or the science of our social relations, psychology or the science of man's inmost being, and perhaps other sciences besides, must

³⁶ The relevant correspondence is in the Tiele Collection of the Leiden University Library.

³⁷ In the following pages I will make use of this translation (Tiele 1897-1899), but I will check it against the original Dutch version, which appeared in the same years and which was re-issued in a slightly revised form in 1900. The translation is not always adequate. Italics are always taken from the original.

yield their contributions in order to help us to learn the true nature and origin of religion, and thus to reach our goal (I: 17).³⁸

History, anthropology, and so on, are conceived as auxiliary disciplines that are all more or less inductive in character, while science of religion proper ought to use the deductive method. The last method is not to be confused with the speculative method of former times. “On the contrary, our deductive reasoning must start from the results yielded by induction, by empirical, historical, and comparative methods. What religion is, and whence it arises, we can only ascertain from religious phenomena. Our inmost being can only be known by its outward manifestations” (I: 18).

From the outside to the inside of religion: this is the metaphor which guides Tiele’s research programme. We find the dialectics between inside and outside, between core and shell, on different levels. For instance, it is used to argue for the priority of intentions or beliefs over against (ritual) practices. Tiele stated that the inner conviction guarantees that doctrine does not become “an empty phrase, a lip-service, the parrot-like mumbling of a catechism” (II: 191). This also applies to ritual: Celebrating the Holy Communion depends on the meaning which is attached to it. Contrary to outward appearances, “the widely different significance attached to it by Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, by Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin, renders it a very different ceremony in each case”.³⁹ Moreover, the inside-outside dichotomy plays an important role in the division of the “Elements” into two Parts. The first, *Morphological* Part is concerned with “the constant changes of form resulting from an ever-progressing evolution”, whereas the second, *Ontological* Part deals with “the permanent elements in what is changing, the unalterable element in transient and ever-altering forms” (I: 27). The permanent elements will be found on the inside, as will

³⁸ Numbers between brackets refer to the English edition: Tiele 1897-1899. Italics in the quotations are always taken from the original text.

³⁹ Cf. Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 26. The English edition translates the Dutch term “Gereformeerden” by “Evangelicals”. The translation “Calvinists”, however, is more adequate. For Tiele’s views on ritual, see Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 148f.

be shown below. The term “ontological” is perhaps a bit misleading in this context, because Tiele does not want to enter into a metaphysical discussion about transcendent issues, but to research the constituent elements of religion as such.

2. The Definition of Religion

The Gifford Lectures start with some preliminary questions. Prominent among them is the problem of the definition of religion. To begin research, Tiele wrote, one must have a general characteristic of religion. This first definition is not meant to determine the essence of religion, which can only be ascertained at the end of the whole investigation.⁴⁰ Tiele does not begin by sketching “a preconceived ideal of religion”, but by stating what is “generally understood” by the term. In a general sense it means “the aggregate of all those phenomena which are invariably termed religious, in contradistinction to ethical, aesthetical, political, and others” (I: 4). A rather formal distinction, I would say, but one which is fundamental to Tiele’s (later) work. Moreover, it is the implicit presupposition underlying science of religion as such. Because religion is thought to constitute a distinct sphere, the urge arises to establish a distinct discipline which researches this domain.

On a more substantial level, religion is specified as being concerned with “those manifestations of the human mind in words, deeds, customs, and institutions which testify to man’s belief in the superhuman, and serve to bring him into relation with it” (I: 4). Again, the duality of (external) manifestations or phenomena⁴¹, on the one hand, which express (internal) human belief, on the other hand, is striking. Compared to earlier characterizations given by Tiele which focused on the relationship between man and the superhuman⁴², the emphasis on external expressions of religion is new. This could be adduced as an argument for the alleged “phenomenological” character of Tiele’s science of re-

⁴⁰ Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 4.

⁴¹ The two terms can be used as synonyms (cf. Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 4f.; Tiele 1901: 4), although on other occasions they are also contrasted (cf. below).

⁴² Tiele 1877: 1f.

ligion. The common feature of phenomenological research is defined by Jacques Waardenburg as “the desire to interrogate religious data for their meaning, while trying to avoid imposing personal value judgements on such data”.⁴³ Although the term “phenomenological” is, as far as I can see, only to be found in Tiele’s latest work, he practised some sort of epochè (without using this term), denying that the superhuman as such is subject of research. The presupposed “reality of the objects of faith does not concern us here. We therefore leave the question open. The object of our science is not the superhuman itself, but religion based on belief in the superhuman” (I: 5). These beliefs can be studied scientifically, the scientific character of the new field being of great importance to Tiele.⁴⁴ No doubt, Tiele wanted to give here a generally acceptable, unbiased characterization of religion, which would, therefore, provide a stable basis for the new science. Striving at precision, he spoke of “superhuman” instead of “supersensual”, since the second term would exclude “visible deities”.⁴⁵ It is the judgement of the religious practitioners — and not that of the scholar who studies them — which determines whether or not their deities are “superhuman”.

In contrast to earlier writings, the Gifford Lectures did not define religion in terms of the relationship between human beings and superhuman *powers*. The concept of power was only introduced in the second part of the book, in the chapter on “The Constant Element in All Conceptions of God”. In his definition Tiele avoids the term (superhuman) power, but he speaks freely about “God” or “gods” (as equivalent to “superhuman”). Without much reasoning he seems to take for granted that the “superhuman” sphere is populated by gods or spirits.⁴⁶

⁴³ Waardenburg 1972: 129.

⁴⁴ Cf. Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 5f.

⁴⁵ Tiele 1877a: 2.

⁴⁶ Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 290: “The earliest [conception of a God, ALM] was not polytheistic, still less monotheistic, or even what has been termed henotheistic, but consisted in a vague, indefinite, glimmering notion of a supernatural or spirit world, to which all the spirits, thousands upon thousands of them, belonged”.

Although Tiele can do without the notion of power, he does need the concept of superhuman or gods to characterize religion. The fact that the notion of (superhuman) power is not used in the definition does not imply that it is no longer important. Superhuman power is still “the one element which essentially and indispensably constitutes the idea of a god” (II: 80).

In this context it is necessary to make a remark on the use of the concept of power in late nineteenth century science of religion, because in the historiography this concept is above all connected to the “preamimistic” theory of religion, as put forward by R.R. Marett (1866-1943).⁴⁷ He is famous for his critique of his teacher E.B. Tylor, whose definition of (“primitive”) religion as a belief in souls and a belief in the animation of nature (“animism”) was considered by Marett to be “too narrow, because too intellectualistic”.⁴⁸ Marett did not locate religion in an intellectual need, but in the experience of power.⁴⁹ This view had great impact on the subsequent study of religion. Rudolf Otto’s concept of the Holy was influenced by it, and Marett was important to early sociologists of religion, like Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, too.⁵⁰

But as the example of Tiele shows — and other examples could be added⁵¹ — the notion of power played an important role in the study of religion before Marett proposed his theory on preanimism. What is the difference between them? Marett argued (against Tylor) that

the attitude of mind dictated by awe of the mysterious, which provides religion with its raw material, may exist apart from animism... Objects towards which awe is felt may be termed powers. Of such powers spirits constitute but a single class amongst many.⁵²

⁴⁷ Marett 1900.

⁴⁸ Marett 1900: 1.

⁴⁹ Kippenberg 1994: 381.

⁵⁰ Kippenberg 1994: 383-386.

⁵¹ Réville 1881: 104; Troeltsch 1895-1896: 381; on Troeltsch, see Molendijk 1999.

⁵² Marett 1900: 1 (taken from the summary that Marett wrote for the second edition; cf. Marett 1914). In a later contribution (1909) he specified his views in more detail.

Religion is fundamentally perceived as a sphere of experience, ideas and concepts being of secondary importance. "My own view is that savage religion is not so much thought out as danced out".⁵³ This is a different world compared to Tiele, who sees religion primarily in terms of belief. Speaking about power, Tiele means the root idea in every conception of God.⁵⁴ The notion of power is in Tiele's view basically a (religious) concept, whereas Marett points by the same term to an experiential sphere.

3. Manifestations and Constituents of Religion

Before going on with the discussion of Tiele's key concepts, we must digress slightly and take the structure of the Gifford Lectures into account. To identify this structure it is helpful to take a glance at another of Tiele's books, actually the last one he published himself, "Main Features [Elements] of the Science of Religion"⁵⁵, which appeared 1901 in Dutch and covers much the same ground as the Gifford Lectures. Compared to the Gifford Lectures, which give a much more elaborate account of approximately 600 pages, this outline is small (125 pages in large print). Nonetheless, it has the advantage that it shows the infrastructure of Tiele's science of religion. The main arrangement is captured in the following scheme:

<i>Outline 1901</i>	<i>Gifford</i>
Prolegomena	Part I: Lecture 1
Morphology	Part I: Lectures 9-10
Ontology [with two subsections:]	Part II
— phenomenological	Part II: Lectures 1-7 ⁵⁶
— psychological	Part II: Lectures 8-10

⁵³ Marett 1914: XXXI.

⁵⁴ Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 81.

⁵⁵ Tiele 1901.

⁵⁶ The first, introductory, lecture of the second series explains the relationship between the phenomenological and the psychological part proper.

The Prolegomena deal with preliminary questions, such as the problem of the definition of religion which we discussed in the above subsection. The morphological part treats the development of religion. Here, Tiele gives a classification of religions (the most prominent dichotomy being the one between nature and ethical religions⁵⁷) and formulates laws of religious development. These themes are of great importance to him, but, as said, this part still concerns only the changes of forms, and not the permanent element in what is changing. This last topic, concerning “the origin and the very nature and essence of religion” (I: 27), is explored in the ontological part of the Gifford Lectures. It is called ontological because it concerns “‘being’ — that which *is*, as distinguished from that which grows or *becomes*, the *ousia* as distinguished from the ever-changing *morphai*” (II: 188).⁵⁸ No metaphysics is intended. Tiele assured his audience that he is only speaking of the essence of religion in the psychological sense.⁵⁹ Psychology is crucial because the phenomena discussed in the ontological part are “psychic and therefore steady phenomena”, whereas the morphological research treats “historical and therefore transitory phenomena”.⁶⁰

Because of the sharp contrast between Morphology and Ontology and the focus on the (ontological) research into the essence of religion which is of a psychological nature, the impression is very easily created in the Gifford Lectures that the whole second series is psychological in character. This is not the case. Several amendments in the second Dutch edition and, especially, the “Main Features” show the somewhat hidden structure more clearly. The first part of the second series is concerned with “manifestations”, the second with “constituents”. By manifestations Tiele means primarily “words and deeds”; by constituents, “emotions, conceptions, and sentiments, of which words and deeds are at once the offspring and the index” (II: 6f.). Only the research into the constituents is properly called psychological (“psychological-

⁵⁷ Cf. Kippenberg 1995: 138-141.

⁵⁸ Cf. Tiele 1900, Part II: 165 (Dutch edition).

⁵⁹ Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 188f.

⁶⁰ Tiele 1901: 61.

synthetic”), whereas the investigation into the manifestations is termed “phenomenological-analytical”.⁶¹ Chapters 2-7 (on religious doctrine, praxis, and organization) are phenomenological; chapters 8-10 (on essence, origin, and the place of religion in spiritual life) are psychological.

From the outside to the inside: this is the alleged *ordo cognoscendi*. The manifestations express the underlying constituents. Moreover, religious words and deeds are only expressions of authentic religion if they “flow spontaneously from the heart” (II: 7). The underlying “emotions, conceptions, and sentiments”, therefore, have ontological priority: they guarantee the authenticity of the religious expressions (manifestations). The *ordo essendi* is opposite to the *ordo cognoscendi*. On the other hand the possibility of a psychological study of the constituents is stipulated. These constituents are occasionally referred to as “phenomena”⁶², and Tiele claims to know that religion always begins with (which is not the same as originates in)⁶³ an emotion. He then explains what is meant by “emotion” or “affection”⁶⁴: “Strictly

⁶¹ Tiele 1901: 61. The second Dutch edition makes things more complicated by introducing the asymmetrical contrast between “phenomenological-analytical” and “synthetic-psychological” (Tiele 1900, Part II: 2).

⁶² Terminological rigour and elegance are not Tiele’s strong point. Religious words and deeds, which in the contribution to the Encyclopaedia Britannica were still termed “constitutive elements” of religion, are in the Gifford Lectures categorized as “manifestations”. They express the underlying religious “emotions, conceptions, and sentiments” which are not in the proper sense of the word called “manifestations”. To refer to these constituents Tiele uses the term “phenomena”, which is, of course, close to “manifestations” (which is clear from the fact that they are on other occasions used by Tiele as near synonyms). Another complication is that the Dutch term for manifestation (“openbaring” = the German “Offenbarung”) has a strong religious connotation, meaning “revelation”. In this context, however, such a religious connotation is not implied; the term simply indicates that something is revealed, made manifest (in the general sense of the word). — For Tiele’s view on the concept of religious revelation, see Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 131f.

⁶³ Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 15. Tiele’s view on the origin of religion will be dealt with below.

⁶⁴ The Dutch version has “aandoening”.

speaking, an emotion is simply the result of something that moves us [affects us, ALM]" (II: 15). However, the word is used here in the following sense:

And in this sense every emotion embraces three elements: (1) a predisposition, in the form of certain longings or aspirations, as yet partly unconscious, and certain latent and vague conceptions, differing according to the temperament and inclination of the individual, which may be described as a mood; (2) an impression produced upon us from without, or the affection itself; and (3) the fact of becoming conscious of such an affection, or the perception of such affection (II: 15).

The first element — the religious mood — is of central importance because it determines whether or not an impression awakens an actual religious emotion. If it is missing, one may have, for instance, an aesthetic emotion (experience), but not a religious one. The third aspect mentioned implies that the emotion which is perceived, so to speak, gives rise to a conception. Here the connection between emotion and conception — the first two elements of the triad mentioned above — is established. This almost closes the circle because emotion and conception together easily lead to a definite "sentiment", as the translation has it, or, perhaps better, to an inclination or disposition⁶⁵ which impels to action. The emotive, cognitive, and practical aspects are closely knit together.

The emphasis on religion as an ultimately psychological phenomenon easily leads to a neglect of the social and practical dimensions of religion. Only two lectures of the second series are devoted to these dimensions. The sixth lecture deals with religious praxis ("Worship, Prayers, and Offerings") and the seventh with religious organization ("Religion As a Social Phenomenon: the Church").⁶⁶ Interestingly enough, the question that is discussed here is not whether religious persons of the same inclinations will form a community or association. Such a question would be in line with Tiele's individualistic outlook. Instead, he asks: "Does religion, in its own nature, and with a view to

⁶⁵ The Dutch version has "gezindheid"; cf. Tiele 1900, Part II: 16.

⁶⁶ Cf. Tiele 1901: 62f.

its perfect evolution, require so mighty a mechanism, so elaborate an association as the church ...?" (II: 162). The question concerns societies in which religion constitutes a separate sphere that is independent of the state. The question is phrased in such a hesitant way because, ultimately, Tiele has a spiritual conception of religion.⁶⁷ The domain of the church is defined as the spiritual-religious. "[The Church] must never forget that she is a purely spiritual institution, which can only attain its lofty aims by spiritual means" (II: 180).

4. The Essence, Origin, and Place of Religion

(a) The eighth lecture of the second series — the inquiry into the *essence* of religion — marks the turn to the psychological-synthetic part of Tiele's morphology. As could be expected, the essence is not to be found in the varying conceptions, rituals, or institutions of religion. It would be equally foolish, Tiele declares, to call the body the essence of human beings.⁶⁸ One has to go from the visible to the invisible, from religion as an anthropological phenomenon to religiosity, in which the external manifestations originate. "And what root can this be but faith?" (II: 191). Tiele admits that this was the view he indeed formerly held, and that he still thinks that without faith (the meaning of the term is not specified in this context) religion becomes an empty phrase or a senseless praxis. But in the meantime, a counter-question has occurred to Tiele: Does this not apply to the whole of spiritual life? What is moral life without belief in the reality of goodness? How can the scientist advance without faith in the unity of nature? And so on. Consequently, a more precise definition is needed.

First, a Kantian view that defines religion as the belief in the moral order of the world, which is guaranteed by a supreme power, is rejected. Tiele is more inclined to see the kernel of all religion in the "belief in the Infinite above us and the infinite within us" (II:

⁶⁷ On the explicit rejection of such a spiritualist conception by the Durkheimians, see Strenski 1997: 131f.

⁶⁸ Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 191 (Dutch edition 1900, Part II: 167).

194).⁶⁹ But this solution which once satisfied him “does not appear entirely adequate” any longer. It is too much of a dogma; actually, it is a compound of two dogmas (the Infinite *above* and *within* us). The proposed solutions are too intellectualistic, too much on the level of concepts and ideas, to convince Tiele.

Instead, the essence is to be located at the level of religiosity — the subjective side of religion.⁷⁰ Tiele captured the essence in one word: piety.⁷¹ Devotion would also be a proper term “because it involves the idea of self-dedication and personal sacrifice” (II: 197f.), but this describes only one crucial aspect, not the whole “pure and reverential disposition or frame of mind” (II: 198) which is called piety. In the rest of the eighth lecture Tiele seeks to explain, in ways not always easy to understand, what piety really is. After having established piety to be the essence of religion, he alleges that the essence of piety and, consequently, religion is adoration. The reason why he does not use the word worship in this context probably is that this term can be associated with “external” acts, whereas solely “internal” veneration is meant. Adoration involves two opposite tendencies: “To adore is to give oneself..., [b]ut at the same time adoration includes a desire to possess the adored object, to call it entirely one’s own” (II: 198f.).

It is notable that Tiele does not explicitly supply an object of the adoration most of the time, but talks about it in the abstract. The endeavour to locate religion in “the inner depths of the human soul” (II: 24), in a “frame of mind”, makes the referent on various occasions almost disappear. However, the cognitive level cannot be passed over completely. In a key passage Tiele states: “In adoration are united those two phases of religion which are termed by the schools ‘transcendent’ and ‘immanent’ respectively, or which, in religious language, represent

⁶⁹ The inconsistent spelling of Infinite (with and without capital) is not found in the Dutch edition; cf. Tiele 1900, Part II: 170.

⁷⁰ On one occasion Tiele distinguished between the subjective side (religiosity) and the objective side of religion (religion proper); cf. Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 183. The distinction, however, is not carried through systematically.

⁷¹ Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 196; cf. the Dutch edition: II: 172.

the believer as ‘looking up to God as the Most High’, and as ‘feeling himself akin to God as his Father’” (II: 198). Still, Tiele maintains that the term “adoration” alone suffices to characterize religion because, when applied to the relationships between human beings, it is used in a metaphorical way. But for the sake of clarity he is willing to determine the essence of religion as the “adoration of a superhuman power, on which we feel dependent”.⁷² It is claimed that the germ of this essence can be found in primitive religions as well.

(b) After having established the essence of religion, Tiele discusses in the ninth lecture its *origin*. The question is not concerned with *how* it arose. He is not interested in the (historical) beginning of religion in human history. Instead, the question runs: “*Whence* does it spring, not in one instance but in all, or what is the source in man’s spiritual life?” (II: 209). What is the psychological foundation of religion? Several answers given by philosophers of religion are discussed and rejected. According to Tiele, we do not receive much help from Schleiermacher’s “unconditional sense of dependence” (II: 222). He also rejects the theory, adopted by himself in earlier times, that “religion is the result of a conflict between the sense of self and the sense of affliction”.⁷³ The origin of religion cannot be explained from feelings of fear and helplessness and the search for a god who can control danger. Feuerbach is a fine example of this point of view, and Tiele praises him for his fine psychological analysis, although he repudiates the negative conclusion that the whole process is purely subjective.

In sum: there is no denying that the wishes and desires Feuerbach analyzed so well exist. The question one ought to ask, however, is: “But whence do they come? Why is man discontented with his conditions and surroundings?” (II: 228). The answer is simple: “because he cannot help it”.

⁷² Added in the second Dutch edition; cf. Tiele 1900, Part II: 179.

⁷³ Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 223. The Dutch term “noodgevoel” (Dutch edition: II: 195) is translated here as “sense of affliction” instead of as “sense of necessity”, as the book’s text has it.

Mere animal, selfish enjoyment cannot satisfy him permanently, because he feels that, as a man, he has an inward impulse which constrains him to overstep the boundaries of the finite and to strive after an infinite perfection, though he knows it to be unattainable for him as an earthly being. The Infinite, the Absolute, very Being, as opposed to continual becoming and perishing — or call it as you will — that is the principle which gives him constant unrest, because it dwells within him (II: 228).

In a phrase which carries Kantian overtones, this precedence of the Infinite is termed “a form of conception” (“voorstellingsvorm”): an idea that dominates man and that constitutes his essence. Tiele quotes Alfred de Musset: “malgré moi l’Infini me tourmente” (II: 230). This “original, unconscious, innate sense of infinity” (II: 233) is presented as a psychological fact. These remarks sound very much like a theory of the “religious *apriori*” that found its famous expression in the work of Ernst Troeltsch.⁷⁴ To prove the validity of this belief in the infinite would be, according to Tiele, the task of metaphysics and not of the science of religion.

(c) The last Gifford Lecture, “The place of religion in spiritual life”, mainly concerns the relationship of religion to morality, art, and science. As is clear from the whole series of lectures, religion is, for Tiele, an independent phenomenon. Thus, he opposes views that reduce religion to something else. Tiele claims that there is a major difference between religion and other cultural activities. Although science, art, and morality yield a considerable measure of happiness, “they never produce that perfect peace of mind, that entire reconciliation with one’s self and one’s wordly lot, which are the fruits of religion, and have ever characterised the truly pious of all ages” (II: 246f.). Only religion can establish harmony and answer the main existential questions: “Whence and whither?” Religion can give an integral worldview. But what is more, it can establish inner harmony: all human faculties are equally involved. The old saying that “religion

⁷⁴ In an earlier text Tiele explicitly opposed such a theory because it explains nothing. It is like saying that a dog barks because he has the capacity to bark; cf. Tiele 1871: 401. On Troeltsch and the *apriori*, see Apfelbacher 1978: 132-139.

embraces the whole of man" may not be strictly accurate, but it is certainly true "that religion, along with all that is truly great in man's aims and actions, emanates directly from the distinctive badge of his humanity — the Infinite within him" (II: 248). In this way, religion receives a central place in Tiele's thought. Here the distinctiveness of man comes most eminently to the fore.

Admittedly, autonomous spheres can conflict with each other. History, indeed, provides examples of religiously motivated hostility to civilization. However, in Tiele's view, this concerns outworn forms of religion and not religion as such, which is not irreconcilable to free developments in other cultural spheres. As long as it is not claimed that religion can be replaced by something else, there can be mutual benefit. "Although certain religious views may conflict with scientific facts, religion itself is not endangered by any legitimate result of scientific research, by any utterance of true art, or by any philosophical or ethical system thoughtfully based on sound principles" (II: 259). The ultimate ground of this rather harmonious view is the conviction that the human spirit is one and indivisible, "though revealing itself in different ways" (II: 244).

In the conclusion of the Gifford Lectures Tiele speculates about a reawakening of religious life. Remarkably, however, he immediately adds that such a reawakening may never be at the expense of the achievements of "[o]ur brilliant nineteenth century" (II: 261). Tiele warns against those who are willing to pay the price of freedom to gain religious renewal. He ponders over the possibility of a manifestation of a free form of religious life. Science of religion cannot call such a new form into being, but it may pave the way for it as it shows the permanency of the religious phenomenon. "And then", as the closure of the Gifford Lectures reads, "without preaching, or special pleading, or apologetic argument, but solely by means of the actual facts it reveals, our beloved science will help to bring home to the restless spirits of our time the truth that there is no rest for them unless 'they arise and go to the Father'" (II: 262f.). Ultimately, science of religion will bring about a deepening of religious life. This is not known for sure, but for Tiele at least, it was a deeply felt conviction. If the religious need is indeed

“the mightiest, profoundest, and most overmastering of all” (II: 261) — and this is presented as a result of the new science — then this need will manifest itself in ever new forms. Given his liberal Protestant idea of religion and teleological view on religious history, Tiele does not expect a religious regression, but he does hope for a manifestation of a new free religiosity, which harmonizes with his most precious science of religion.

V. Conclusion

By claiming that the essence of religion lies in piety and its origin in the innate sense of the Infinite, Tiele located religion in the inwardness of the human individual. The subjective side of religion (religiosity) is highlighted at the expense of its objective side (belief systems, myths, rituals, institutions, and so on). Ultimately, the reality of religion is personal and psychological. The reading of the Gifford Lectures, especially the “ontological” part, does not allow a different conclusion. Yet, one has to keep in mind that, compared to many other of Tiele’s books, these lectures have a strong philosophical orientation. This might seem to be an odd remark, since science of religion as such was characterized by Tiele as a philosophical affair; its explicit goal is to discern the essence (the unchanging constant) in the varying forms of religion. In practice, however, Tiele paid much attention to the forms in which religion appears, especially in his books on ancient religions. In this sense the Gifford Lectures are not fully representative of his work, which is very much concerned with outer manifestations of religion, too. Tiele was known at the time for his mythological studies. Therefore, we have to differentiate between the principal view of religion which was discussed above, and other important parts of Tiele’s writings. Nonetheless, this does not alter the fact that for Tiele the analysis of particular religions and religious phenomena was, strictly speaking, only the preamble to science of religion proper. Most present-day scientists of religion take the opposite view. They see this “preamble” as the core of their discipline, whereas what Tiele proclaimed as “science of religion” is considered by them to be a specimen of vain speculation. The perception of the task and

the domain of science of religion has changed dramatically since its beginnings.

This article explored the ways in which Tiele conceptualized religion: his views on its definition, essence, and origin. To understand his preoccupations and ideals in more detail, we should leave this conceptual level and look at his theories on religious development. Tiele's schemes always end up with Christianity as the last stage of religious development so far. The superiority of Christianity above Buddhism and Islam is established by referring to its "elasticity, which is the natural result of its spiritual character".⁷⁵ An indepth study of Tiele's thought on religious development would be a rewarding task, but in the context of this essay a few remarks must suffice.

In history of religion in general Tiele discerned two tendencies: "the constant rise of new varieties, or progress by differentiation" (I: 284), and the "constant striving for *unity*" (I: 285). Tiele suggested that these contrary tendencies are two sides of the same coin.⁷⁶ The only way this view could be defended — although Tiele is not very specific on this — is to argue that the variety of forms and a tendency to reduce religious belief to a few cardinal points (for example, the Christian principle of love) go together. Under the variety of outer religious forms lies hidden an inner unity of principle, sentiment, and attitude. The "wealth of forms", however, is also due to various levels of development, according to Tiele. The following explanation of the law of differentiation is revealing in this respect:

[W]e observe the march of development attended by ever-multiplying varieties, ever greater wealth of forms, destined indeed to supersede the old, but only with a section of the devout, while the older forms retain their place, for a time at least, alongside the new (I: 294).

Although new forms are "destined" to supersede old ones, this is not always (or, perhaps even, rarely) the case. The laws of progress, apparently, do not apply to all believers to the same degree! Different levels of development exist at the same time. Tiele, of course, knew

⁷⁵ Tiele 1886: 369; cf. Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 208f.

⁷⁶ Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 289.

how to distinguish between old and new forms. Some kind of elitism was not unfamiliar to him. The process of differentiation coupled “with efforts for reconciliation and unity” (II: 295) is not restricted to the religious sphere. It applies to the cultural domain as a whole: the differentiation of cultural spheres is an example of the first tendency. The contrary tendency, however, is not missing: “But this ever-growing independence does not prevent that law of the unity of mind... from taking effect; and efforts are therefore constantly made to reconcile religion with the interests of science and art, of philosophy and morality, of society and the State” (I: 298).⁷⁷

In the developmental schemes, all kinds of antitheses can be framed: between nature and ethical religions, religion and magic, external power and internal conviction, and so on. A true human religion, based on inner conviction — which is a more or less oblique way to refer to Tiele’s own liberal Protestantism — is opposed to the authoritarian Roman Catholic Church which, allegedly, strives for unity at the cost of truth.⁷⁸ Such dualities and developmental laws have a polemical function as well. The law of differentiation can be used to criticize Max Müller’s attempt to derive the classification of religions from that of languages. There may be some truth in this thesis, but “the farther history advances the more does religion become independent of both language and nationality”.⁷⁹

We conclude that for Tiele religion was grounded in the relationship between human and superhuman beings. Science of religion establishes the fact that the belief that God is above as well as in human beings is common to all religions.⁸⁰ The kinship between man and God is crucial. The new discipline has uncovered the psychological nucleus of religion, which expresses itself in ever new forms. Tiele hoped “that men will at length learn to attach no greater value to changing and transient forms than they really possess, these being necessary but al-

⁷⁷ For the law of unity of mind, see Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 232.

⁷⁸ Cf. Tiele 1897-1899, Part I: 287.

⁷⁹ Tiele 1886: 365.

⁸⁰ Tiele 1897-1899, Part II: 103.

ways imperfect and inadequate expressions of the infinite within us”
(I: 301).

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HOLY BOOK — A TREASURY OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE. THE INVENTION OF WRITING AND RELIGIOUS COGNITION

ILKKA PYYSIÄINEN

Summary

This paper provides a theoretical discussion of the role the introduction of writing plays in the development of religious conceptual systems. It is argued that the writing down of religious traditions makes the transmission of radically counter-intuitive ideas possible, and that the formation of Canons introduces the distinction between a foundational text and its philosophical commentary. Defending the foundational role of the sacred texts by rational argumentation either leads to endless regression of arguments, or to circular reasoning and paradoxes. To accept this as natural, would deprive sacred texts of their special status as *the* foundation. In religions, this deadlock is used to illustrate the limits of human reasoning powers and, by the same token, to prove that there must be an ultimate reality which can only be accessed through “revelation”, “enlightenment”, and the like.

1. Sacred Texts and Holy Books

The notion of a ‘sacred text’ is well known in the scholarly study of religion(s).¹ We use such differing expressions as ‘Sacred Text’, ‘Holy Book’, and ‘Scripture’ to refer to the fact that people ascribe to some texts a special status as the foundation of all knowledge about what is ultimately real. According to Carsten Colpe, all sacred texts have not been made to form a Canon, and not all Canons are religious. Religious Canons have only been formed within Buddhism and Judaism, and other existing religious Canons derive from these two roots. (Colpe 1987: 80-84, 88. See also Kippenberg 1992.)

¹ See, for example, the following volumes: Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty (ed.): *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (1979), Frederick Denny and Rodney Taylor (ed.): *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (1985), and Shlomo Biderman: *Scripture and Knowledge* (1995). The Buddhologist Paul Griffiths (1994: *passim*) even translates the Buddhist technical term ‘*sūtra*’ as ‘sacred text’.

It may also be, as Geo Widengren (1950) has argued, that the idea of ‘Scripture’ ultimately derives from the idea of a heavenly book as a canonised embodiment of divine wisdom, known from ancient Mesopotamia. If ‘Scripture’ is thus defined, then the notion of ‘Scripture’ in the strict sense would only belong to the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition.

This suggests that we are, in principle at least, dealing with a two-fold process: the writing down of the traditions, and the formation of a canonised collection of texts. I have elsewhere (Pyysiäinen 1998: 159) briefly remarked that Nietzsche’s statement that “as the circle of science grows larger it touches paradox at more places” applies to religion as well in the sense that as oral tradition is written down and some kind of a Canon is formed, mythology is turned into theology which always involves paradoxes, contradictions produced by accepted ways of reasoning.

In what follows, I shall try to show the importance of the introduction of “sacred texts” and Canons in this process. I shall not aim at a detailed historical account of the development of any religious tradition, but shall confine myself to a theoretical discussion with brief examples from Christian and Buddhist traditions which both involve canonised texts making use of rational argumentation.

My hypothesis is that the emergence of sacred texts marks a change in religion in the sense that the specialists start to strive for a *coherent and complete* doctrinal system (and end up with circular reasoning and paradoxes)² which is supposed to be universally valid, independent of time and place. The use of writing changes people’s attitude toward religious tradition, which now becomes an object

² I use the notions of coherence and completeness in analogy to the so-called Gödel’s Proofs saying that any system comprehensive enough to contain the whole of arithmetic can only be proved to be *consistent* by employing rules that are not part of the system to be proved consistent. But, then we have to prove the consistency of the other system of rules, and so on *ad infinitum*. Mathematics is also not a *complete* system in the sense that given any consistent set of arithmetical axioms, there will always be true arithmetical statements that cannot be derived from the set. (Nagel & Newman 1964. See Pyysiäinen 1996b.)

of preservation unlike in non-literate cultures. Sacred texts being preserved unchanged, all change is attributed to new interpretations (as if there could be “pure” textual meaning, without interpretation). Thus, tradition comes to be defined as “what the Scripture says”, while in non-literate cultures tradition is “what we have always done” (which does not presuppose that the elements of tradition really were preserved unchanged). (Boyer 1987; 1990.) The idea of preserving the supposed original meaning of the sacred texts is accompanied by a striving for conceptual coherence in the interpretation of this meaning.

My approach is inspired by Jack Goody’s (1986: 3-4) claim that “alphabetic” religions spread literacy, literacy spreads “alphabetic” religions, and that, in fact, the whole *idea of religion* has been thus spread. This is due to the fact that only within literate religions is “religion” seen as a distinct category. Only literate religions have autonomous boundaries, and their adherents are defined by their attachment to specific Scriptures and a specific Credo, in addition to their practice of certain rituals. Literate religions are also religions of conversion. Membership in them is determined by commitment to certain doctrines and rituals as well as by having certain kinds of religious experiences, not by the fact that one is born into a specific group in a specific geographical setting.³ (Goody 1986: 4-7.)

Of course, Christianity as a literate religion also obtains members by baptising infants which, however, are expected personally to accept the faith when they reach adolescence. Moreover, members of literate religions are in a position to break away from the faith into which they have been socialised. A group of renegades can then form a new sect that separates itself from the main group, while still claiming to cling to the same body of sacred writings. (Goody 1986: 9-10.)

³ This distinction was also part of Karl Jaspers’ and Lewis Mumford’s idea of an “Axial Age” in 800-200 BC, when such great individuals as Socrates and the Buddha were active and one’s religion no longer was determined by one’s birth. The new, “axial”, religions were all centred around specific inner experiences. (See Mumford 1957.)

Thus the territorial boundaries⁴ defining an ethnic religion are replaced in literate religions by the conceptual boundaries provided by the “portable fatherland” (Crüsemann 1987), the Holy Book.⁵ The Holy Writ is a new kind of measuring stick, and with its introduction also the concept of truth acquires a new meaning as a theoretical property of propositions.

2. *Religious Truth and Paradox*

In his *The Philosophy of Religion*, Ninian Smart (1979: 99-104) notes that revealed texts are accepted as true on authority, although the very idea of truth is at odds with uncritical acceptance of authorities. Defending the truth of a revealed text by quoting the text itself leads to circular reasoning, and defending the text by external arguments would deprive it of its role as the ultimate authority. Similarly, merely accepting that *something* must be accepted as foundational (see Pihlström 1996: 393-394; Saariluoma 1997: 11-12) would deprive the Holy Book of its status as *the* ultimate foundation.

The observation about circular reasoning has recently been made by Shlomo Biderman as well. According to him, “Scripture” is characterised by the fact that it provides us knowledge that includes the criteria of its own truth, which leads to circular reasoning of the following kind (Biderman 1995: 3-7, 81, 95-103):

- 1) A given text X is the word of god
- 2) How do we know this?
- 3) Because it is said in text X
- 4) But how do we know that it is true?
- 5) Because X is the word of god

⁴ On the importance of territorial and other boundaries in religion, see Anttonen 1994; 1996.

⁵ This is reflected, for example, in the fact that comparative religion only became possible after the Bible had been “dethroned from its traditional pedestal” and was understood simply as literature that could be studied like any other form of literature (Preus 1998: 15).

This vicious circle is produced by the mixing of the foundationalist and anti-foundationalist approaches to religion. In other words, it is at once supposed that religious people try to justify their claims by rational argumentation, *and* that in failing to do this they accept the authority of the Scripture simply as given, yet pretending it to be foundational (cf. Smart 1979: 100).⁶

Pascal Boyer (1994: 253-256) has drawn attention to the suggested circularity of religious claims, noting that there is circularity only in so far as the specific judgements of individual believers are abstracted into a “theology”. This, however, is not legitimate since the differing judgements concerning authority are not copresent in any person’s mind at one time.

We have good reasons to accept as correct Boyer’s view of the way ordinary people reason about religion. Religious claims in everyday life are context-dependent and do not necessarily form any coherent system of ideas, a world-view, or theory (see Boyer 1987; 1990; 1994; 1996). But then, on the other hand, some believers do construct abstract theologies employing rational argumentation. For them, circularity does become a problem that needs a solution. This is usually provided by presupposing the existence of a special kind of knowledge like “revelation” or “enlightenment” as foundational. This involves an ontological assumption that the world is not a closed system, but that “beyond” it lies another reality whose existence constitutes an explanation for the known reality. An endless regression of explanations does not follow because the other reality is unknown and thus cannot itself be explained (see note 2). I give two brief examples.⁷

Karl Barth built his theological system on a strict dichotomy between God as a foundation and religion as a vain attempt to go beyond

⁶ On (anti)foundationalism in choosing a religious or philosophical outlook, see Pihlström 1996: 389-399.

⁷ I have elsewhere (Pyysiäinen 1996a; 1996b; 1998) tried to show that religious conceptual systems contain both a way of categorising reality, and the means of calling this categorisation in question (e.g. “mysticism”) by postulating some kind of a “not-world” which is considered more real than the known reality, yet escaping all explanation.

the human limits to reach the foundation. God's revelation came "directly from above" and was not constrained by the human capacity for knowing. This naturally leads to the conclusion that we cannot know anything about God, and this is precisely what Barth said. For him, the theologians greatest anguish was in the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of speaking about God. Compared to this, everything else was "mere child's play". (Barth 1980: 225-238; *Anfänge der Dialektischen Theologie* 1974: 199.)⁸

To provide a rather different kind of example, within Mahāyāna Buddhism the Buddha is considered a "means of valid cognition" (*pramāna*)⁹, i.e. a foundation, in such matters which cannot be decided by perception (*pratyakṣa*) or reasoning (*anumāna*). The Buddha is trustworthy because he is compassionate and as a perfectly liberated one would not benefit anything from lying (van Blijert 1987). Buddhist scriptures receive their authority from the fact that they are believed to embody the "Buddha-word" (*buddhavacana*) which is the "ultimate truth" (*paramārtha satya*), i.e. a foundation. (See Ray 1985; Lopez 1988; Griffiths 1994: 12-23, 31-51.)

The notion of ultimate truth, however, leads to a paradox as soon as we claim, like the Buddhist author Jñānagarbha, that all distinctions belong to the realm of relative truth, and ultimate is ultimate only in contrast to the relative. Therefore, says Jñānagarbha, ultimately also the ultimate is relative. Then also the claim 'ultimately the ultimate is relative' is relative, and the ultimate thus is only relatively relative... (See Pyysiäinen 1996b.)

⁸ Barth also wrote: "When men stretch out their hands and touch the link which binds them to God, when they touch the tree *in the midst of the garden*, which ought not to be touched, they are by this presumptuous contact separated from Him (Barth 1980: 247-248)."

⁹ *Pramā* refers to 'knowledge', and *pramāna* is whatever causes knowledge to arise. Vasubandhu developed a theory of perception and reasoning as *pramāna* in the 5th century. Dignāga (c. 400-485 or 480-540) developed it further, and Dharmakārti created an important synthesis. (Blijert 1987; Mohanty 1992: 133-149, 227-268.)

3. *Theoretical and Practical Reasoning*

The distinction between theology (of whatever religion) and the way ordinary people reason about religion seems to run parallel to the distinction between theoretical and practical reasoning made by Gilbert Harman (1986). This means, first of all, that the distinction between practical and theoretical does not parallel the distinction between religion and science. Both science and religion include “non-spontaneous” systems of representation based, among other things, on the human capacity to store in memory half-understood information, as such writers as Scott Atran and Dan Sperber have noted. Religious and scientific knowledge differ from the “spontaneous” common sense knowledge that is of the same kind all over the world. (Atran 1990: 263-265).¹⁰

According to Sperber (1996: 69-71), both religious and scientific concepts are reflective and are not based on mere perception or on specific innate schemas. They are based almost exclusively on communication, and their formation takes a great deal of time. Thus, they both contrast with everyday empirical knowledge that consists of “spontaneous” representations based on perception and communication, and are stored in “encyclopaedic” memory as true descriptions of the world.¹¹

No matter how we define “religion”, and whether *all* religion is “non-spontaneous” or not, it seems fairly obvious that at least some religious representations are expressed in highly technical language and defended by philosophical arguments (good or bad). In Harman’s terms, they involve theoretical reasoning employing rules of argument that are not by themselves rules for revising one’s view. In other words, theological thinking employs theoretical rules of argument, although *in*

¹⁰ It is here not important to decide whether scientific thinking differs from common sense qualitatively or quantitatively (see Carey 1996: 189-190 and note 12).

¹¹ Sperber’s (1975) (and Atran’s) theory of symbolism as a specific kind of encyclopedic knowledge about knowledge, as distinguished from semantic knowledge about the world, however, suffers from a one-sided notion of semantics as simply extensional (see Lawson & McCauley 1990: 137-166; Malley 1996: 112-113).

practice people may reason and change their religious views according to quite different principles. (See Harman 1986: 2-4.)

Theoretical reasoning is not necessarily restricted only to religious specialists, and specialists do not always reason theoretically. Yet we have reason to believe that theoretical reasoning in religious matters is more common and more elaborate within specialist's thinking. Our present concern is how does the reasoning of specialists within literate religions differ from that of the specialists within non-literate religions. More precisely, if the principles of reasoning (logic) are by and large the same in literate and non-literate cultures (see D'Andrade 1995: 193-207), how does the introduction of sacred texts specifically enhance the striving toward coherence and completeness in religion? My suggestion is that theological argumentation is in certain respects similar to scientific thinking, and that it is the writing down of sacred texts that gives rise to such theological argumentation. The introduction of such thinking does not mean the introduction of a completely new type of mind (not to mention higher general intelligence), but only that people have available a new tool which enhances such task-specific cognitive skills as theological reasoning (see Rubin 1997: 15, 196, 308-318). If information cannot be written down, there will be a heavy load on memory which has to maintain the information which it is currently manipulating and also to perform the intermediate steps necessary in the manipulation (Rubin 1997: 317).

4. *Theology and Science*

According to Lawson & McCauley (1990: 26), explanatory concerns play a fundamental role in everyday life, the focus, however, being on explaining *particular events* that occur in everyday life. Moreover, such explanations are usually in service to the interpretation of those events. There is usually no concern for identifying systematic relationships among the explanatory principles which often seem largely superficial. Even if they were true, their scope is very limited.

Lawson & McCauley see scientific thinking not as completely different from everyday thinking, but on a continuum with it.¹² Yet only scientific thinking is able to provide systematic explanations of phenomena. Explanations are “scientific to the extent (1) that they operate by means of systematically related, general principles that employ concepts at levels of abstraction removed from that by which the phenomena to be explained is currently characterised and (2) that such systems of principles from which explanations proceed are empirically culpable beyond their initial domain of application.” (Lawson & McCauley 1990: 27.)

Scientific explanations issue from systems of related principles and thus can liberate us from the isolation that often characterises explanations of common sense. Unconnected explanatory principles can only summarise available knowledge, not extend it. Only a theory making use of abstract concepts can really extend our knowledge. The generality of a theory’s explanatory principles and the abstractness of its concepts guarantees that it is empirically tractable beyond the domain to which it was initially applied. (Lawson & McCauley 1990: 28.)

If we think of constructive¹³ Christian theology for example, its ties to philosophy are very close, and it obviously employs systematically related principles that are general and concepts that are abstract.

¹² Although some reject the idea of continuity between scientific and ordinary cognition because scientific theories are formalised and result from institutionalised, self-aware cognitive activity, unlike intuitive theories, the continuity hypothesis can be defended if scientific theories are seen as explanatory structures and not as sets of sentences from which predictions can be logically derived. Both intuitive and scientific theories are cognitive structures characterising the causal mechanisms at work in the world and thus making explanation possible. A theory consists of certain ontological commitments and modes of explanation for the phenomena involving entities recognised by the theory. The intuitive theories of ordinary folk are thus part of the starting points for science. (Carey 1996: 189-191, 211. See also Dewey 1910.)

¹³ By *constructive* theology I refer to such systematic theology that strives toward constructing and explicating dogmas to be believed, in contrast to scientific theology that only studies how people understand and actually realise Christianity.

Theology only includes certain assumptions, such as God's existence, revelation, etc., that are not empirically verifiable or falsifiable¹⁴, and are not empirically culpable beyond their own special domain of application. The basic conceptual postulates¹⁵ of Christian theology separate between it and the sciences in the sense that theology operates on a different domain of phenomena and employs a different causal mechanism. The same holds — *mutatis mutandis* — for Buddhism, for example.

This can be taken as evidence for Lawson & McCauley's view of common sense and scientific thinking as the endpoints on a continuum. Theological thinking obviously is situated somewhere on the continuum between these two ideal types. What is important with regard to our present concern, is how the introduction of systematically related, general principles and of concepts on a level of abstraction higher than that of the phenomena to be explained changes religious thinking. This change is closely tied to the introduction of sacred texts.

5. *Orality and Literacy*

According to Sperber (1996: 74-75), in oral tradition most learning is spontaneous, and all cultural representations are therefore easily remembered ones, while hard-to-remember ones tend to be forgotten before they reach a cultural level of distribution. With the appearance of writing, an "external memory store" comes available and more things can be communicated. This fits well with William Bechtel's (1996: 128) idea that verbal language provides us with a powerful extension to our cognitive capacities, and written documents are specifically constructed representations with which we have learned to *interact* (i.e. they are not just transcripts of our mental processes).

Thus, we can take the written text as a sort of "extended memory", or "cognitive prosthesis" as Rubin (1997: 311) calls it, enabling us to process more efficiently such knowledge Sperber and Atran call "half-

¹⁴ On the ideas of verification/falsification and truth in the philosophy of religion, see Pyysiäinen 1996a: 57-63.

¹⁵ On conceptual postulates, see Saariluoma 1997: 70-73.

understood". One who knows the specific code used by the author of a text can use the text as a material basis for mental representation, but without a reader a text is completely mute, mere paper and ink. It, however, allows for new ways of processing information efficiently (see Rubin 1997).

In Sperber's view, human cognition is typified by the ability to store in memory half-understood information in a meta-representational form. When a little child, for example, hears that 'uncle Joe died yesterday' she may not understand it but yet stores the sentence in her mind in the vague hope that some day it may become understandable, or just because adults seem to be very serious about the sentence 'uncle Joe died yesterday'. The sentence is then represented in the form 'it is a fact that uncle Joe died yesterday, whatever "died" means'. (Sperber 1996: 71-72. See Atran 1990: 263-265.)

Similarly, an adult may embed such sentences as 'quarks do exist' and 'Jesus has risen from the dead' in such meta-representations as ' "quarks do exist" is true', and ' "Jesus has risen from the dead" is true'. In these two examples, the respective reasons for the hunch that these statements may not only be true but also important, are different, of course. Yet in both cases authority plays a crucial role. One who does not understand the statements 'quarks do exist' and 'Jesus has risen from the dead' but yet is prone to accept them as true, does so because he or she thinks that some other people have very good reasons to put forward such statements and hold them to be true. The one who does not understand the statements does not think that there is something wrong with the statements, but that there is something wrong with his or her ability to understand. In other words, the statements are accepted on authority. (Sperber 1996: 72.)

In Sperber's view, the cultural success of certain half-understood propositions is due to the fact that they are more memorable because of their evocativeness. The most evocative propositions are such that they on one hand are closely related to the subject's other mental representations, and on the other can never be given a final interpretation. One can then only be consistent by treating such propositions as "mysteries". (Sperber 1996: 73.) Tony Edwards (1993) is making essentially

the same point in his idea that believers “quarantine” religious paradoxes until such time they possibly can be solved, by putting them in quotation marks in the same manner we have just seen.

Thus, if someone has the belief that the Bible is the word of God, and also cannot understand some statement in the Bible, say, “whosoever will save his life shall lose it” (Mt 16: 25) for example, he or she quarantines it by meta-representing it as ‘“whosoever will save his life shall lose it” is true because it is said in the Bible’.

The Bible is, of course, full of such statements that an ordinary believer finds difficult to understand and which we thus have reason to believe to have been forgotten had they not been written down. Any sentence written down is stored unless the text is destroyed by some external event, and it is capable of being reread and reinterpreted, unlike sentences in oral tradition which only live in so far they are actively repeated (Ong 1991: 31-33). They cannot be put aside and taken up again after many years, or even decades or millenia.

There is now empirical evidence that sufficiently counter-intuitive ideas are better recalled than intuitive or extreme counter-intuitive beliefs (Boyer, forthcoming a & b). Thus, for instance, people may entertain a belief that a wooden statue can hear their prayers, *or* believe that an omniscient God can hear their prayers from afar. But practically no-one seems to have the belief that a *wooden statue* could hear people’s prayers *from afar*.

In the first case, it is counter-intuitive that an artefact can hear (a cognitively non-standard situation), whereas the second case is counter-intuitive in the sense that we have a person, God, without biology and physics (a physically non-standard situation). The idea of an artefact that can hear prayers from afar would involve both transference of intelligence to an object and a violation by denying normal physical restraints of hearing, which means too much counter-intuitiveness for the human cognitive system. In other words, if an artefact is to have cognitive capacities, they tend to be standard. Non-standard cognitive capacities are restricted to normally intentional agents.

In Holy Books, however, both intuitive and *radically* counter-intuitive ideas become stored and thus can be taken up for comment and analysis in different occasions. Such things as certain historical details of St. Paul's travels, for example, may be considered too uninteresting (i.e. containing no counter-intuitiveness) to have survived undistorted in oral tradition, whereas the beginning of the Gospel of St. John may be considered too counter-intuitive to have survived for us without being written down.

In other words, written text makes it possible to store ideas that people can read about even when they do not (fully) understand them. As Socrates relates in Plato's *Phaedrus* (274-5), writing makes it possible for humans to “read many things without instruction and... to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant . . .”¹⁶.

This is occasionally recognised in sacred texts themselves. In the New Testament, we read about an Ethiopian eunuch to whom Philip says: “Understandest thou what thou readest?” The eunuch then replies that he naturally could not, unless someone guided him. (Acts 8: 26-31.) In Buddhist texts, we find similar statements according to which the one who reads the Sūtras without an understanding remains unhappy for a long time (Majjhimanikāya I 133). In an important Mahāyāna commentary, four pieces of advice are given: take refuge in Dharma, not in person; take refuge in meaning (*artha*), not in letter; take refuge in direct seeing (*jñāna*), not in discursive thinking (*vijñāna*); take refuge in texts with “explicit meaning” (*nūtartha*), not in texts with “implicit meaning” (*neyārtha*) (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra I, 536-538. Ks. Ray 1985: 160-169; Griffiths 1994: 51-53.)

It is not just that we can remember more with the aid of writing, but that we preserve and remember different kinds of things. This also brings along the problem of understanding both in the sense that more *complex ideas* are preserved and in the sense that their *systematic relationships* can be considered as the various claims are now copresent in a single text, book, or collection of books. Whereas in oral tradition words are events and only live as pronounced, in

¹⁶ Quoted in Harris 1986: 19.

literate tradition words acquire stable “dictionary meanings” which make systematic reflection possible (Ong 1991: 31-33).

It may, however, be objected that the Vedas, for example, were orally transmitted for centuries and for the first time written down only in the 12th century CE. Yet they form a huge body of traditions, preserved unchanged. This has made Goody (1987: 110-122) suspect that the Vedas may actually have been written down at an early stage, although the text was not preserved.

There is no evidence for this whatsoever, but Goody is right in that the Vedas are literature and have probably been preserved unchanged. This has been made possible by certain techniques in memorising tradition as faithfully as possible. Such specifically memorised traditions should be distinguished from spontaneously preserved oral traditions.¹⁷

The similarity of the preservation of specifically memorised tradition to literate tradition does not, however, necessarily imply that the *production* of the content has also taken place in the same fashion as within literate traditions, and that therefore the content is of the same kind as in literate traditions. The crucial difference between specifically memorised oral tradition and literate tradition is that literacy introduces in religious specialists a more urgent need for theoretical coherence because the whole of the tradition can be more easily accessed in written form.¹⁸

This then makes possible the important distinction between Holy Books and the so-called commentarial literature as found in Buddhism and Christianity, for example. We do not know the exact date when the Buddhist Sūtras and Vinaya rules were for the first time written down, although the Sinhalese tradition dates this to the third decade BCE (see Weller 1928: 161-164; de Jong 1989: 242), or when the first

¹⁷ See Honko 1996 and Rubin 1997 on variation in the performance of oral epics.

¹⁸ The first Indian school within which it was thought that the ultimate goal of humans could be an object of rational inquiry and within which a specific epistemology and logic was developed was *Nyāya*. Its oldest text is the *Nyāyasāstra* from 200-450 CE (Mohanty 1992: 133-149).

Abhidharma treatises, systematising the “doctrine”, were composed, but the two events are temporally close. Even the possibility that the “Hīnayāna” texts, the Abhidharma included, were all oral and that writing was first used by the Mahāyānists cannot be ruled out (see Lopez 1995).

The roots of the Abhidharma are in the so-called *mātrikās* (1st century BCE), lists summarising the teachings of the Sūtras, and the first Abhidharmapitaka was then compiled by the Sarvāstivādins in the first century CE. The Abhidharma represents an attempt to develop a specific “technical language of salvation” (Gómez 1987: 447) by which all entities could be analysed to their ultimate constituents (the “reviewing of *dharma*s”). (Winternitz 1972: 11, 165-166; Lancaster 1987: 504; Hirakawa 1990: 139-143.) This was considered by the Abhidharmists the means to liberation. The structure of the Abhidharma is not explicitly one of a sacred text and its “theological” commentary, this structure first clearly appearing in the Abhidharma commentaries from the first century CE onwards (see Hirakawa 1990: 133-138). What is important is that there obviously has been no oral commentaries.

The first genuine Christian theological writings also appeared only after the letters of St. Paul and the Gospels had been written.¹⁹ Although the legitimacy of employing philosophy in the interpretation of the Scripture has always been a matter of debate in theology, even the early fathers made extensive use of it (Wolfson 1956). The Greek word ‘*theologia*’ originally was practically synonymous with ‘*mythologia*’ and referred to ‘talk about the gods’, and the early Christian authors therefore rejected its use. Their God had nothing to do with Greek mythology or philosophy.²⁰ It was only St. Augustine (354-430) who adopted ‘*theology*’ for the Christian vocabulary and

¹⁹ The final content of the New Testament Canon was decided by bishop Athanasius’ letter of the year 367, as its list of authoritative writings was confirmed as constituting the Canon by the pope in 405. (See Kümmel 1970: 74-75.)

²⁰ For Aristotle, ‘*theology*’ was almost synonymous with ‘first philosophy’ which studied unmoved objects (the second and third philosophies being ethics and natural philosophy).

defined it as “thought or speech explaining the divine essence” (*De Civitate Dei* VIII.1²¹).

Augustine used neoplatonic philosophy to explain the relationship between God and the world, and the Augustinian-Platonic tradition dominated theology until the breakthrough of Aristotelianism in the 12th century (see Copleston 1950; Jeanrond 1991). Within Buddhism, the early Abhidharmists represent the first attempt at a conceptual synthesis. After the emergence of *Mahāyāna*, Buddhist doctrine was then developed by logical analysis within the important schools of *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* and by their Tibetan inheritors (see Stcherbatsky 1930-32; Murti 1980; Lopez 1988; 1995; Nagao 1992.)

Thus, the writing down of religious tradition seems to give rise to theological interpretation in the sense of attempts at constructing a coherent and complete metaphysical system, based on a foundational text(s) and its rational commentary. The dialectics between a foundational text and the logical explication of its meaning in turn leads to “hermeneutical” paradoxes that can only be “quarantined” in the hope that they will be solved and counter-intuitive representations might turn out to be quite intuitively true in a reality revealed through “revelation”, “enlightenment”, etc. This entails the idea of a hidden “not-world” constituting the ultimate explanation for the known reality.

It should finally be pointed out that it is not that the “religions of the Book”, or literate religions in general, were somehow more “developed” than non-literate religions in the sense that they contained some “higher” truth. It is just that they employ a new device, writing, for transmitting cultural representations. In this way more counter-intuitive representations can be transmitted, and a systematised metaphysics emerges. Thus, theology is on the same continuum with folk belief (see Malley 1997: 397). However, the logical impossibility together with the theological necessity of having foundational knowledge which yet is itself founded turns the “hermeneutical circle” be-

²¹ “Natural theology, so-called, of course should not be discussed with the man in the street... Instead we must hold a conference about it with the philosophers...”

tween the interpreter and the interpreted to a “hermeneutical vortex”²² of endless regress and paradoxes.²³

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²² Pye 1994: 107: “hermeneutical vortex. The inescapable whirlpool down which those depart who agonise too greatly over difficulties of interpretation.” On theological hermeneutics, see Jeanron 1991, and on “Buddhist hermeneutics” Lopez 1988.

²³ It is interesting that a similar problem arises also in quantum physics where, according to Bohr’s version of the so-called Copenhagen interpretation, all properties of a system have meaning, and even existence, only in relation to the measuring apparatus used (see Pyysiäinen 1996b: 199-200).

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PANEL DISCUSSION: *MAGIC IN THE ANCIENT WORLD* BY
FRITZ GRAF

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

SARAH ILES JOHNSTON

In 1997, to mark the publication of Fritz Graf's *Magic in the Ancient World*, a panel discussion of the book was organized for the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion and Society for Biblical Literature, under the auspices of the Greco-Roman Religions group. The book, which was published by Harvard University Press the same week that the panel was convened, represents an English translation of Graf's *La magie dans l'antiquité greco-romaine* (Paris 1994), which had already appeared in German and Italian translations.¹

Graf attempts two things in this book. First, to give his readers a grounding in the "facts" of ancient magic to the extent that this is possible, given the lacunose state of our evidence. He endeavors to tell us what the practitioners of magic in antiquity did, and in doing so, tries what no other scholar had done since Hopfner published his two-volume monograph on the topic in the 1920s.² Thus, the choices that Graf makes when he includes some materials for discussion in his book and excludes others set parameters that are bound to affect subsequent treatments of magic insofar as they implicitly define what magic is and is not.

Graf goes beyond Hopfner, however, in his second goal: to discuss the reactions of the ancient populace to those practitioners and their activities, sketching in some detail the sociological milieux in which magic took

¹ *La Magia nel Mondo Antico* (Bari and Rome 1995). *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber: die Magie in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Munich 1996).

² *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber. = Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde* Bd. 21 (Leipzig 1921) and *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber. Seine Methoden. = Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde* Bd. 23:1 and 23:2 (Frankfurt 1924). The volumes were reprinted in 1974, 1983 and 1990 (Amsterdam).

place in antiquity. The theoretical questions he asks of his materials are intended to clarify the roles that magic and the magician played within the Greek and Roman societies. How, for example, did a magician become a magician and what does the process signal about his position in society — was he a dark and marginal figure like the Merlinesque characters of fiction or a ritual practitioner of central importance to many aspects of life, private and public? And how — to get to the biggest and most pressing question — is magic to be separated from religion in the first place in the context of ancient Greek and Roman beliefs and practices, if indeed it can be separated at all? In asking such questions, Graf must grapple not only with his immediate topic of magic but with some basic issues that underlie our understanding of ancient Greek and Roman religion in general. Who controlled religious practices? How was religious power understood to be properly deployed? The models for understanding magic that Graf offers in this book, if we accept them, have ramifications that extend far beyond their immediate applications. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that Greek and Roman definitions of magic — legal, philosophical and literary — significantly affected subsequent European definitions of magic: Graf's work is likely to affect studies of the phenomenon in those cultures, as well. Moreover, whether we like it or not, theories about magic developed by earlier scholars, such as Sir James Frazer, were heavily influenced by their study of Greek and Roman materials in particular. Reinvestigations of the premises on which our assumptions about Greek and Roman magic were built are bound to have effects that travel far outside of the field of classics.

What is offered here are written versions of the comments offered by the SBL panelists: John Gager, Martha Himmelfarb, Marvin Meyer and Brian Schmidt, followed by the response offered by Graf. Also included is a written version of remarks made during the question period of the panel by David T.M. Frankfurter, which stimulated significant discussion both during the panel and afterwards.³

³ I would like to take this opportunity to thank not only the participants in the panel and Professor Frankfurter for their cooperation, but William Cassidy, Chair of the Greco-Roman Religions group, for help in organizing the panel.

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COMMENT BY JOHN G. GAGER

Graf's book is the best general treatment of 'magic' on the market. It is wide-ranging and sophisticated. Unlike many earlier scholars, especially his fellow classicists, Graf has acquainted himself thoroughly with the large body of theoretical literature on magic, ranging from Wittgenstein's reflections on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, through Claude Lévi-Strauss and Marcel Mauss, to Stanley Tambiah's thick essays on magic and metaphor. Beyond this, in his first chapter, he has chronicled the gradual emergence of magic from the dark caves where it lived for more than two millennia to the dim light of academic study in the early years of the 20th century among German scholars like Wilamowitz, Dieterich, Usener, Wünsch and Preisendanz. What I have called the dirty little secret of the classical world thus came to receive the attention that it obviously deserved, although, as Graf points out, it remained trapped in various evolutionary perspectives (especially under the influence of Frazer) that continued to relegate it to the category of the primitive and the superstitious.

Running throughout all of these discussions, and underlying Graf's first two chapters, is one fundamental theme — the relationship between 'magic' and 'religion.' Is 'magic' humanity's first attempt to deal with the universe, an attempt characterized by mechanical manipulation? Is magic eventually superseded by religion and today by science, which in Frazer's scheme has much in common with magic. Or is 'magic' what happens to religion when it begins to decay and dissolve? What is the relationship between magic and religion? Or better, how have these terms been used — by whom, of whom, when and why? If our analysis of these questions tells us that the term magic is a hopelessly loaded word, a word whose usage tells us more about those who use it than about what other people believe and do, then we have no option but to abandon it in our scholarly discourse. Conversely, if it retains some analytic value, we can clean it up, sanitize it and re-deploy it in our books and articles. As Graf puts it, "there are only two possible attitudes —

either a modern definition of the terms is created and the ancient and Frazerian notions are resolutely cast aside or the term *magic* is used in the sense that the ancients gave it, avoiding not only the Frazerian notions, but also all the other ethnological notions of the term. I shall choose the second way... instead of creating a rigid and artificial terminology.⁴ This second way, then, means using the term as the ancients used it.

But here is the rub. First, as Graf rightly notes, the early use of *mageia* among Greek authors shows two aspects: it is associated with Persia (hardly a warm association for Greeks in the 5th century BCE, although this changes somewhat from the 4th century onward) — this is the ethnographic side of the term, one which it never loses — and could be described by Xenophon as “expertise in things concerning the gods”.⁵ But at the same time, and even more prominently, it carried negative connotations not unlike our terms ‘nut’ or ‘kook’ or ‘charlatan.’ Now the following questions arise: Can a term fraught with these associations — foreign, outsider, subversive, weird and even dangerous — be cleaned up enough to be useful in modern academic discourse? Since the term is so heavily loaded in a particular direction — not just negatively but also socially (in favor of the social elites who produced the surviving literature) and ethnically (in favor of Greeks, and later Romans, as opposed to foreigners) — can we strip it of these associations in conversations among our fellow scholars, let alone in our exchanges with non-academic audiences? Since the term is so heavily biased toward a literate elite (Graf’s basic view here is that the term is used almost exclusively to designate phenomena “not belonging to the collective religion of the Greek polis”⁶), can we avoid the intrinsically elitist cast of the term?

At this point in what is his useful study of how the term *mageia* evolves in Greek authors, Graf introduces the notion of a paradigm change, represented first by philosophical theologians (e.g., Plato and Heraclitus) who began to criticize the traditional practices and beliefs of the Greeks and to label them as ‘magic;’ and also by the medical scientists (he cites here the well-known treatise *On the Sacred Disease*) who similarly attacked traditional healers as *magoi* and charlatans. The result is two-fold: the term *magos* becomes a

⁴ P. 18-19.

⁵ Xen. Cyr. VIII 3,11.

⁶ P. 27.

polemical term of disparagement and it comes to be associated with a whole range of non-civic religious forms.⁷

By now the terminological dilemma has begun to shape — and the dilemma is more than just terminological. But first, how significant, in its own time, is the paradigm change? How widely influential were Plato and the author of the treatise on the sacred disease? If their sphere of influence was as limited as I suspect, are we not in danger of adopting a thorough-going elitist point of view in following their definition of magic? I fear that Graf's penetrating analysis of the social location and use of the terms *magos* and *mageia* can only make us deeply suspicious of their value in our own work. Furthermore, as G.E.R. Lloyd points out⁸, the understanding of epilepsy in the treatise on the Sacred Disease, for all of its polemics against the absurdities of the *magoi*, is no closer to the truth of the matter than was theirs. Second, if we follow the view that magic was — or better was attached as a label to — non-civic practices, are we any better off? Does this mean that we must, with the polis-based elites, label the worship of the country-side as magic? And what are we to make of Plato's observation that these "charlatans" peddled their incantations precisely among the wealthy residents of the Athens? Apparently Plato does not speak even for all of those connected with what we might call the bearers of civic piety. And how can we account for the fact that the *defixiones* (curse tablets) of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE name long lists of leading citizens? If, as I have argued⁹, we see in these tablets the concrete expression of hostility within and between Athenian elites, we will have to expand our definition of civic religion to include, *at its core*, what some ancients (but only a tiny minority) chose to call *mageia*. And in this instance, even the term 'popular' will not do (Mikalson¹⁰), since those who commissioned the *defixiones* were clearly members of the Athenian elite. This is not to deny the obvious fact, as Graf, following the work of Richard Gordon, has pointed out that in later times many of the spells and rituals were formulated in more or less

⁷ P. 34.

⁸ *Magic, Reason, and Experience. Studies in the Origin and Developement of Greek Science* (Cambridge 1979) 48-59.

⁹ *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York and Oxford 1992) 119.

¹⁰ J. D. Mikalson, *Athenian Popular Religion* (Chapel Hill 1983) 23.

conscious opposition to civic rites¹¹, although even here it seems likely that the practitioners of the spells believed in their efficacy precisely because they knew (and shared in) the world of civic piety. In other words, to sum up this part of the dilemma, civil religion turns out to be a far more complicated thing than at first glance. Here we run the risk of committing a serious form of the elitist fallacy if we adopt a powerfully performative language created by a socially-biased minority which has succeeded in imposing its view by virtue of having out-survived all of its ancient contenders.

Here I should make two things clear. First, Graf has forcefully put aside the vacuous evolutionary theories of Frazer and his followers. And second, there is no easy way out of the bind created by the contaminated history of the term magic. We cannot resolve the difficulties by putting the word in quotes. The recent volume of Christian materials edited by Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith created the phrase 'ritual power' in the sub-title of their book but resorted to 'magic' in the main title.¹² In the long run, I am convinced that we need to abandon the loaded distinction between 'magic' and 'religion' altogether, but I seem to be one of the very few to hold this view. Least satisfactory of all for me is Graf's solution — to use the term magic as the ancients used it. I have already argued that this solution leads us into substantive difficulties. But it also produces confused sentences that mirror the confused history of the terms. Let me cite just a couple of examples. In describing the work of Hermann Usener, Graf writes the following: "Usener's interest in magic was derived from his interest in the origins of religion; magic was part of popular religion, the religion of the masses, especially of the rural populations, the one close to the origins of religion..."¹³ Or later, "Magic thus fits into a set of well-known facts about the religion of the imperial era."¹⁴ Or again, "Magic does not historically follow religion, neither is it earlier; religion contains magic, as one specific religious form."¹⁵ And in discarding the traditional distinction between magic as coercive and religion as supplicative, he writes that "magic had a well-

¹¹ P. 229-232.

¹² M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic. Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco 1994).

¹³ P. 12.

¹⁴ P. 117.

¹⁵ P. 211.

defined theological and epistemological aspect... this theology makes magic close to the mystery cults... the spirituality of the magicians is akin to the spirituality of the followers of the mysteries, in that both take part in this quest for the divine that is characteristic of imperial antiquity.”¹⁶ My point here is that in each of these passages, the terms magic and religion seem to be substantively interchangeable, to mean pretty much the same thing. In other words, confusion arises because at the level of terminology Graf wants to hold on to a distinction that does not exist, even in his own thinking.

One final comment: The picture is even more confused than I have presented here. For there exists a minor, and startling tradition, even among ancient Platonists, in which the term *mageia* is used in a thoroughly positive way, though always against the backdrop of its predominantly negative and derogatory usage and, curiously, sometimes with specific reference to its connections with Persia. The Jewish Platonist Philo, in the *Special Laws* (3.100) speaks of the truly magical and scientific vision¹⁷ which reveals the facts of nature and which is taken by ordinary persons and kings, especially among the Persians, to be worthy of serious consideration. With this ‘true magic’ Philo contrasts the counterfeit version, used by charlatans and the lowest of the low, which dispenses charms and incantations of various sorts. Apuleius, in his *Apology*, turns the charge of magic against his accusers by describing it as “an art acceptable to the immortal gods, full of knowledge of worship and prayer, full of piety and wisdom in things divine, full of honor and glory since the day when Zoroaster and Oromazes established it.”¹⁸ And Plotinus, in a lengthy discourse on how spells work speaks, like Philo, of ‘true magic’ (*aléthinē mageia*), which operates like the power of love. “For this (i.e., love) is the true wizard (*goēs*) and enchanter, from observing how men came to use his philters and spells on each other.”¹⁹ Finally, Origen, in his reply to the pagan critic Celsus, makes the equally unlikely claim, thus defending a similar notion of true magic against its pagan and philosophical detractors: “so-called magic is not, as the followers of Epicurus and Aristotle

¹⁶ P. 221.

¹⁷ III 100 *aléthinē magikēn, optikēn epistêmēn ousan*.

¹⁸ *Apology* 26. — The passage continues, quoting Plato: “a certain Zalmoxis, a Thracian and also a master of this art, has written that ‘magical charms are merely beautiful words’.”

¹⁹ IV.2.40.

think, utterly incoherent, but, as the experts in these things prove, is a consistent system which has principles known to very few...”²⁰

Where does all of this leave us? Can we use the term magic as a neutral designator? I think not. Can we use it the way the ancient used it? No — in part because, as I have tried to show, they used it in totally contradictory ways, although the dominant legacy of the ancient is negative and derogatory. Can we say, “‘Magic’ — as Philo, Plotinus and Origen (to name just one each from among Jews, pagans and Christians) used it.” That is obviously much too clumsy. I wish that I could offer a handy solution. What I do know is that comfortable old habits are hard to break. We just need to keep looking.

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COMMENT BY MARTHA HIMMELFARB

The English book we are discussing bears a somewhat different title from its French original: *Magic in the Ancient World* vs. *Idéologie et pratique de la magie dans l’antiquité gréco-romaine*. On the basis of personal experience, I am inclined to understand titles as revealing more about publishers than about authors. So I approach this suggestive transformation without attributing any intention to the author. My comments relate not to the reduction of *idéologie et pratique* to magic plain and simple, about which a great deal could surely be said, but to the end of the title, *antiquité gréco-romaine*, which in English has become the ancient world. I hope that attention to the qualifier absent from the English will allow me to point to some directions for further study.

“Greco-Roman” can be used in different ways. The inclusive usage applies to the long period on either side of the turn of the era of Greek and Roman domination of the Mediterranean world, and it includes the period of the hellenistic empires, which are in some sense Greek. Here the hyphen means something like “through.” But the term can also be used in a more limited sense. In this narrower usage “Greco-Roman” means Greek and Roman, Greek or Roman, and the hellenistic period and its culture occupy

²⁰ *Against Celsus* I 24.

an ambiguous place. It would appear to be this narrower sense that is invoked in the French title, for Graf's emphasis in *Magic in the Ancient World* is on Greek and Roman magic. Egypt gets rather little attention, and Jewish magic, with the exception of the Eighth Book of Moses, is completely absent, while the intriguing suggestion that the origin of Greek binding spells is to be found in Assyria rather than in Persia or Egypt permits Graf to avoid extended discussion of these usual suspects. These omissions are part of a general deemphasis of the hellenistic period, in which Egypt and Persia would surely play a more important role than Assyria, in favor of the earlier Greek and later Roman situations.

In part these choices are a natural consequence of the nature of the evidence. One of the many virtues of Graf's book is that it makes clear the very uneven distribution of the primary texts for magic from the ancient Mediterranean. The two most important corpora of primary texts for the millenium intended by "Greco-Roman" in its broad sense are the curse tablets and the magical papyri. The curse tablets are widely distributed in time and space, but the weight of the evidence is early and Greek. The magical papyri, on the other hand, come from Egypt under the Roman empire. In other words, the hellenistic period, the period in between, has not left as rich a deposit of magical texts for scholars.

In the concluding pages of *Magic in the Ancient World*, Graf offers some suggestive comments about the history of magic on the basis of the developments that have taken place from the curse tablets to the magical papyri. The "competitive, non-hierarchical" ethos of the classical Greek cities²¹ explains the important role curse tablets play as people struggle to gain the advantage of their neighbors. The social settings for accusations of magic that Graf so elegantly evokes in the second chapter (on the magician seen from outside), on the other hand, are Roman: one example is drawn from the Republic, the other from the empire, but both are emblematic of important aspects of Roman life in their time. Cresimus was a freedman whose success as a farmer incurred the envy of his neighbors in the early second century BCE, while Apuleius was accused of being a magician by citizens of the North African town where he had taken up residence in the late second century CE. Both were outsiders who had disturbed the social equilibrium, and thus both became targets for the accusation of magic,

²¹ P. 173.

the outsider's craft. Graf views reversals of elements of standard religious practice as characteristic of magic: the use of birds as sacrificial animals, for example, rather than the usual pigs, sheep, and cows, or the practice of strangling the sacrificial victim to preserve its blood. These reversals provide evidence from the magician's point of view for the place of magic outside the established order.

But would the picture look the same in other less Greco-Roman (in the narrow sense) locations? Apuleius' story, it is true, unfolds in North Africa, but the local élite is highly Romanized. What if Apuleius had made his way to Egypt instead? Clearly magic stands in a very different relationship to the established order in Egypt, where since early times the priests were experts in what some scholars have recently preferred to call "ritual power."²² Of course the very concept of a "civic cult" outside which magic is said to operate is tied to Greek and Roman settings. It is very difficult to apply to Egypt with its multiple temples and lack of strong hierarchy among them.

The difference between Egypt on the one hand and Rome and the more Romanized west on the other is particularly interesting because Egypt contributes so much to the international magic of the Roman period. The dynamics of this contribution are certainly of interest to students of the hellenistic world as a striking instance of cultural interchange, even if much of the process took place later than the hellenistic period proper.

One of the most significant developments Graf sees from the curse tablets to the magical papyri is the change in the gods addressed.²³ While the curse tablets appeal to demons and gods of the underworld, the magical papyri often invoke high gods such as Helios who are understood to have control over the demons. Graf relates the emergence of a more clearly hierarchical pantheon to the development of an increasingly hierarchical society in the Roman empire. Thus magic, which has come to involve contact with the high gods of the pantheon, becomes very hard to distinguish from theurgy and with it philosophy — indeed the difference may be entirely in the eye of the beholder.

The closest Hebrew and Aramaic equivalents to the magical papyri are the hekhalot texts and *Sefer HaRazim*. The hekhalot texts particularly are

²² M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic. Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco 1994) esp. 1-5.

²³ P. 232.

illuminated by Graf's remarks about the place of the high god in later imperial magic: the deities invoked in the hekhalot texts are the God of Israel and his myriads of angelic attendants. They invoke these deities for practical ends, but they also describe means of ascent to heaven for the purpose of gazing on the beauty of God himself and of joining in the angelic praise, activities without any obvious concrete payoff. This combination of what has usually been called magic with what has usually been called religion looks a lot like the piety of the magical papyri with its combination of more and less practical approaches to the gods. In the hekhalot texts, however, there is little evidence of reversal or distance from the established cult; after all, these texts take as their heroes the great rabbis of the founding period of rabbinic Judaism.

The similarity between the hekhalot literature and the magical papyri despite their quite different settings suggests that this type of piety emerged not only in response to the intensification of hierarchy in late Roman society, which would have had rather little effect on the authors of the hekhalot literature. The quest for access to the supreme god in both bodies of texts calls to mind Goodenough's comment in *By Light, Light* that "the problem of the relation of the Unrelated," of how God could be "brought into relation with the world in spite of the fact that He was essentially beyond relation," was the religious problem of Philo's world.²⁴ From this angle of vision some of the magical papyri as well as the hekhalot texts and some gnostic literature can be read as responses to this problem, a more concrete alternative to later Platonism, in which the relation is accomplished by means of a host of intermediary deities, but in which the goal remains contact with the high God himself.

What I've hoped to suggest is that attention to the missing middle of "Greco-Roman" raises some interesting questions about ancient magic that a focus on Greek and Roman magic might not.

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²⁴ E.R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light. The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven 1935).

COMMENT BY MARVIN MEYER

It is with considerable pleasure that I offer a few comments on a book that I consider to be an engaging, provocative, insightful study of magic in the Greco-Roman world. My comments introduce elements of Christian magic and of Coptic magical texts into the discussion, and thereby I address a few of the significant points raised by Fritz Graf in *Magic in the Ancient World*. Most of my observations revolve around the general theme of taxonomy, a much-discussed theme when it comes to the classification of the texts and traditions of ancient magic and ritual power. I comment briefly on the following points: (1) paradigm, (2) marginality, (3) mystery and secrecy, and (4) coercion.

(1) *Paradigm*. In his second chapter, "Naming the Sorcerer," Graf surveys the Greek and Latin terms employed to name ritual power and the practitioners of ritual power (*mageia, magia, magos, magus; goêteia, goës, etc.*), and he proceeds to discuss what he calls paradigms and paradigm changes in the evaluation of magic. At the beginning of the Greek classical period, Graf observes, the dichotomies with which we are familiar — between magic and religion, magic and science, magic and medicine, magic and miracle — did not exist, but around the time of Plato the development of philosophical theology and natural science and medicine changed everything by introducing these dichotomies. Hereafter the term magic and other similar terms frequently were used in a polemical fashion to distinguish between the activities of oneself or one's own group over against an opponent or opponents: *we* observe religion, engage in science, practice medicine, and perform miracles, *they* indulge in magic and sorcery. Hereafter Romans accused early Christians of practicing magic, later Christians accused pagan Romans of practicing magic, and Protestant Reformers accused Roman Catholics of practicing magic. As Graf himself intimates, Christian Protestant polemics, deeply rooted in Greco-Roman polemics, have shaped the scholarly discussion and evaluation of magic in the ancient world. This point is a significant one for our assessment of the history of research on magic and ritual power, and it should be placed alongside the similar conclusion of Jonathan Z. Smith, in *Drudgery Divine*,²⁵ that Protestant polemics also have shaped the scholarly discussion and evaluation of the Greco-Roman mystery religions and have dictated the terms of comparison between the mystery religions and early Christianities.

²⁵ Chicago 1990.

Considering these sorts of issues, then, of taxonomy, description, and classification, I raise three questions for Graf's reflection.

First, if the texts and traditions of magic may be seen and assessed variously — from the inside, from the outside, from scholarly perspectives — what term or terms are best used to describe magic? If, as Graf maintains, for the Greeks "*mageia* is always also the art of Persian priests,"²⁶ then to what extent do xenophobic connotations distort the meaning of the word *mageia* and its derivatives? Some of us have suggested the less loaded and less polemical phrase "ritual power" as a term to describe the phenomena in a more neutral fashion, but such a term, conversely, ignores the polemics that have been so important a part of the discussion of magic.²⁷

Second, how might the relationship between Greco-Roman and Egyptian traditions of magic be characterized? While Graf dismisses Robert Ritner's suggestion that the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* derive almost exclusively from Egyptian religion, he nonetheless admits the importance of Egyptian religious ideas in Greco-Roman religion and magic.²⁸ Elsewhere Ritner has argued that in ancient Egypt, as in early Greek history, there was no dichotomy between magic and religion: ritual power was considered to be a gift of the divine, and the god Heka was the embodiment of divine power that emerged in the beginning and that energized the performance of public and private rituals.²⁹

Thirdly, how might the role of Judaism and especially Christianity be understood, particularly with regard to solidifying the dichotomy between magic and religion, as well as the other dichotomies noted here? Such Jewish sources as Deuteronomy 18:10-11 list a series of manifestations of magic and ritual power, all of which are abominable to the God of Israel, though in reality it appears that the practice of ritual power was as evident among the Hebrews as any other people in the ancient Middle East. Likewise, the literature of early Christianity condemns magic and magicians, and caricatures a religious teacher like Simon of Samaria as a mere *magus*, though in Christianity too it is clear that religious folks

²⁶ P. 29.

²⁷ M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco 1994) 1-6.

²⁸ Pp. 5-6.

²⁹ "The Religious, Social, and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic," in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* 129 (Leiden 1995) 43-60.

made ample use of ritual power. In Christian texts, including Christian magical texts, words like *mageia* and *magia* and the Coptic *hik* are used, but almost exclusively to describe the diabolical force to be eradicated through the power of Christian spells. Classical deities themselves may be addressed in Christian texts, but often they are assigned a demonic place, and their exorcism may even take iconoclastic form. I suggest that Judeo-Christian traditions, with all their ambivalence toward magic and ritual power, inherit the dichotomies we have noted and subject them to a more dualistic interpretation. Yet we may also recall ambivalent attitudes toward miracles and signs, for instance in the Christian gospels of Mark and John, whose authors celebrate miracles and signs of Jesus but also divert the attention of the reader (through Mark's Messianic Secret and John's aretalogical self-predications and mystical discourses) to other ways of understanding Jesus.

(2) *Marginality*. In his third chapter, "Portrait of the Magician, Seen from the Outside," Graf filters the sociological analysis of Marcel Mauss through Pliny and Apuleius in order to show that a magician easily could be seen as a marginal figure and that a marginal figure easily could be seen as a magician: "Any abnormal interest in the sacred can lead to the suspicion of magic."³⁰ In other words, magic can be seen to be religion that is out of balance, that is excessive in its concerns, its curiosities, its contacts with the divine. This view of magic as seen from the outside is quite compelling, and it both helps to explain comments in classical sources and also coheres well with the observations, above, about polemical descriptions of magic. I find this sense of what is marginal and what is central, and the perceived difference and even movement between center and periphery, to be an intriguing matter.

I illustrate part of the issue anecdotally. Heidelberg Coptic text 685 is a parchment codex of ritual power with a variety of magical spells and prayers, including a version of the prayer of the Virgin Mary that is widely represented in Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac, and Arabic magical texts — it was also identified recently in a Greek version on the walls of a crypt in Old Dongola in the Sudan — and that belongs to a magical tradition of prayers of Mary in "Bartos." Mary prays, "Let all things submit to me, for I am Mary, I am Mariham, I am the mother of the life (of) the whole world — I myself am NN. Let the rock split before me today, let the iron dissolve before me today, let the demons withdraw before me today, let the powers of the light appear

³⁰ P. 88.

to me, let the angels and the archangels appear to me today, let the doors that are bolted and closed *<open>* for me, at once and quickly." Other forms of the prayer make it clear that the liberation in mind here can be specified as that of Matthias, for whom, according to the *historiola*, the prison was opened and the bonds dissolved through the prayer of Mary. This prayer, so widely represented in Christian magical traditions, has its counterpart in the classical and modern iconographical traditions of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In October 1997, Girgis Daoud Girgis and I visited the small Church of St. Mary who Dissolves the Chains, in Cairo, where there is a modern painting, in three panels, executed by Yousef Girgis Ayad in 1990, of Mary the Theotokos freeing Matthias, who is shown striding forth from prison with chains melting off his body. I was told that the church celebrates a festival at the end of July, at which festival this story of ritual power is rehearsed. Above this church is the Convent of St. Mary, with an icon, prominently placed, showing the same scene. Actually, what is shown is a reproduction of an icon, the original being at the Hanging Church of St. Mary, al-Muallaqa, in Old Cairo, with its several scenes of miracles — or magic — from the life of the Virgin Mary. In the icon, one might say, the deeds portrayed are miraculous, in the spells of ritual power, the deeds described are magical. Close by, at the Convent of St. George, or Mari Girgis, the chains of Mari Girgis are displayed in a room next to an icon of St. George, whose tortures at the hands of a Persian king included the use of chains — supposedly these very chains. Today the pious stop by to put these chains on their necks and hands and to kiss them, for, the accompanying legend assures, touching the chains can bring miracles and cast out evil spirits, and this is accomplished, it is added, "by faith."³¹

Without a doubt a complex of social, political, and religious factors dictate the varied places of these magical, iconographical, and liturgical chains in Egyptian life. A complex of factors determine center and periphery, and these factors help to distinguish between the magical Mary of texts of ritual power over against the miraculous Mary of the Coptic Church.

(3) *Mystery and secrecy.* Initially in his fourth chapter "How to Become a Magician: The Rites of Initiation," Graf discusses the similarities between

³¹ Cf. M. Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels* (P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685) (Heidelberg 1996) and my forthcoming paper in a conference volume to be edited by myself and Paul Mirecki.

magic and the mysteries, and he highlights three features: they involve secrecy, they seek direct contact with the divine, and they include ritual initiation. This topic of magic and the mysteries is a fascinating one, and it merits further consideration. I find it to be of interest for at least two reasons, one mentioned by Graf and one not. Graf cites the so-called “Mithras Liturgy” as an example of initiation in magic and the mysteries, and in so doing he brings before us a text from the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* that has perplexed and intrigued scholars since the time of Albrecht Dieterich.³² Some see the text as clearly Mithraic, some as partially or fully magical. The questions of the Mithraic and magical components in the “Mithras Liturgy” remain unanswered, and now David Ulansey’s suggestion of a kinder and gentler Mithras, an astronomical/astrological figure who prompts the precession of the equinoxes and who cranks the sky around in the “Mithras Liturgy,” raises the question in a new way.³³ Graf does not cite Christianity in comparison with magic and the mysteries, but he might have, since Christianity shares the three features mentioned by Graf. I believe that at least some Christianities may be closely linked to the mystery religions and classified with them, and that Clement of Alexandria is essentially correct in his *Protreptikos*, less his Christian chauvinism, when he depicts Christianity as a mystery, but the only true mystery: “O truly sacred mysteries! O pure light! In the blaze of the torches I have a vision of heaven and of God. I become holy by initiation. The Lord reveals the mysteries.”³⁴ Now Graf’s discussion may allow this comparison and classification to move further.

Here I also mention, in passing, one of the three common features of comparison: secrecy. The magical texts in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* and other sources counsel secrecy, from the injunction in a Greek spell with Coptic elements, “Keep it secret; it is proven,” to the spell uttered *sotto voce* in the “Mithras Liturgy” (“Whisper to him the first prayer . . . , and say the successive things as an initiate, over his head, in a soft voice, so that he may not hear, as you are anointing his face with the mystery”).³⁵ Some spells are hidden, buried, concealed. Graf applies this feature of secrecy to ritual communication, and he concludes, “The magic rite thus seems to short-circuit

³² *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, 3rd ed. by O. Weinreich (Leipzig and Berlin 1923 [1903]).

³³ *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries* (New York and Oxford 1989).

³⁴ Clem. Al. *Pro*. 12.120.

³⁵ *PGM IV*. 741-46.

the communication: the sender and the recipient are identical.”³⁶ The practitioner, he assumes, performs the ritual alone and in secret. This may well be right, but I would ask whether this is always necessarily so. Could it be that the injunction of secrecy is at times a conceit, a contrived feature meant to cast a shadow of mystery and awe over the magical operation? Such would be perfectly comprehensible in the world of antiquity and especially late antiquity, with its preoccupation with the secret and the hidden — as the *Gospel of Thomas* puts it, “There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed.”³⁷ Graf mentions erotic magic in this regard, and he alludes to the way in which an individual’s emotional crisis may be reflected in the descriptions of the lovesickness to be induced by the spells. My hunch is that Graf is correct; ordinarily I too have expected that herein lies the real power of the erotic spells. But I ask myself, and Graf, whether it may also be possible that some sort of magical, ritual communication in fact does take place, and that the contents of erotic and other spells may have been disclosed. Could love and sex spells function as love letters, crying out to the one desired for love and satisfaction, supercharged with what was perceived to be supernatural passion? Could sexual curses to leave a man impotent function as psychosomatic cold showers, leaving a male with that sinking feeling of mighty cosmic forces defusing his paltry libido? Could other curses and other spells, for example, to bind a person’s tongue and hence to render him tongue-tied, likewise work through communication with a recipient and the power of suggestion?

(4) *Coercion*. Near the end of his book, Graf raises the familiar topic, known already in Plato and emphasized in Christian sources, of coercion in magic and ritual power, and he stresses the varieties of coercion and persuasion as well as the related issue of the organization of the cosmos and the powers of the cosmos. I fully concur with Graf’s conclusion: “coercion, although present, is not really constitutive of Greco-Roman magic, but is only one of the elements of a much more complex ideology.”³⁸ Rather, the topic of coercion is in large part caught up in polemical statements against magic.

I conclude by illustrating this point from Coptic Christian magical texts.³⁹ To be sure, the texts are about power, and ritual power comes to expression

³⁶ P. 210.

³⁷ *Gospel of Thomas*, 5.

³⁸ P. 227.

³⁹ Translations from *Ancient Christian Magic*, note 27 above.

in texts that employ the legally binding language of adjuration, and use Coptic verbs in imperative and injunctive and third future forms to command supernatural power, and punctuate all this with typical statements of ritual impatience: now, quickly, at once! In a Coptic text from the H.O. Lange collection, a thundering deity called Petbe, “Requier,” is roused along with other divine powers, and the practitioner threatens that a lack of divine compliance will bring about the summoning of several deities of coercion, including Greek gods and goddesses: “If you do not obey the things of my mouth and pursue the things of my hand, I shall call upon Salpiax, Pechiel, Sasmiasas, Mesemiasim, and the seventy gods, and Artemis the mother of all the gods, and Apollo and Athena [and] Kronos and Moira, Pal[las and] Aphrodite, Dawn, Serapis, [Ura]nos.”⁴⁰ Such commitments to the power of effective persuasion, however, are not unknown in other examples of prayer that is not usually considered to be magical. Further, in Christian texts of ritual power there also are humble statements of intercession and request: “So now, my Lord, have mercy upon your likeness and your image. Do not allow the work of your hands to fall into ruin.”⁴¹ A Christian amulet written in Greek and intended to protect Aria from fever, shows very nicely the interplay between power and piety that is possible in magical texts: “Truly guard and protect Aria from the one-day chill and from the daily chill and from the nightly chill and from the mild fever of [the top of the head]. You shall do these things [graciously] and completely, first on account of your will and also on account of her faith, because she is a handmaid of the living God, and that your name may be glorified continually, [power] of Jesus Christ, Father, Son, Mother, Holy Spirit, Abrasax, ΑΩ ΑΞΙΟΥΩ.”⁴²

In short, Christian practitioners of ritual power were — and are — quite capable of expressing deep humility and piety, even as leaders centrally placed within the orthodox churches were — and are — equally capable of reveling in power and coercion.

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⁴⁰ From *Ancient Christian Magic*, note 27 above, 237-39.

⁴¹ Heidelberg Coptic text 686.

⁴² Oxyrhynchus 924.

COMMENT BY BRIAN SCHMIDT

My meanderings into the past distinguish themselves both geographically and chronologically from those of Fritz Graf; mine target a world neighboring ancient Greece and Rome, but one that more or less ends where his begins. I investigate magic as it manifested itself in Iron age “Levantine” cultures (as they are traditionally tagged). My research takes me into the religions and cultures of ancient Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel-Palestine, and, to a lesser extent, Cyprus. My data represent the written and non-written remains of the various sub-groups of ancient Mediterranean West Asia: Ugaritians, Arameans, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, and Israelites to name but a few. My evidence spans the 12th to 6th centuries BCE, a period in the history of the region that can be bracketed by two major transitions: at the front end, the cessation of Hittite hegemony in the region and at its close, the arrival of the Persians. Both of these hegemonies represent more culturally distant empires than those of Assyria and Babylonia that dominated the Levant in the intervening 600 years.

Having drawn the obvious boundaries that distinguish our respective fields, I shall now obfuscate them in order to justify my contribution to this Aegean-oriented debate. As historians of religion, we all are confronted with many of the same problems and issues of investigation such as identifying and interpreting our respective ancient sources, locating them in their social and ideational contexts, and accessing the beliefs of extinct peoples exclusively through their artifactual remains. We also share two parts of what, at one level or another, has been legitimately considered a larger and wider undifferentiated cultural orbit: that of the ancient East Mediterranean. Moreover, when it comes to cultural influence and exchange, one can safely conclude that our worlds have repeatedly collided. They have indeed met and on more than one occasion. That interaction and cultural exchange as they pertain to religious beliefs and practices transpired between the Greco-Roman and Near Eastern worlds, there is no doubt, and Professor Graf readily acknowledges and most competently exploits that reality.

I found Graf's survey of the modern study of ancient magic to be an unanticipated, but much needed, reminder of how far the study of magic in ancient societies has progressed and yet how far it still has to go. The various hindrances and pockets of resistance which he describes have amazingly close parallels in the fields of ancient Near Eastern and biblical studies. When it comes to the investigation of ancient Canaanite and Israelite religions

for example, one continues to face a recalcitrant philological tradition, an incessant romanticism in anthropological and historical studies, and an evolutionary oriented framework of interpretation that to this day evokes Tylorian and Frazerian notions of primitivism. Add to that a self-fulfilling prophetic stance vis-à-vis a *theological* interpretation of the past that pervades my respective field, and one is confronted with a seemingly insurmountable set of obstacles.

Israelite religion, like Greco-Roman religions, is characteristically described or rendered in terms of evolutionistic processes, that is to say, in terms of an essential intellectual advance in human development. This applies in the case of the various supposed advances that have been proposed: from ancestor and death cults to high religion, from magic to revealed religion, from popular to official religion, even from legalistic, ritualized religion to a religion of regenerative spirituality. While these models generally characterize the study of inter-Israelite histories of religions, matters lag even further behind when the Bronze to Iron age religion of Israel is compared to that of her contemporary neighbours. A suitable candidate for illustration, in my reading, are the much-maligned Canaanites. Although one does hear less these days about the debauchery and licentiousness of the Canaanites — their free-wheeling orgies notwithstanding —, one can still detect resistance to placing Canaanite polytheism in all its grandeur on equal footing with Israelite henotheism and monotheism. But as I have pointed out to my colleagues who work at such sites as Ras Shamra, Syria, perhaps it has been left to the French to lead us North Americans out of our puritanical bondage to arrive at a more reliable study of another culture such as the ancient Canaanites. I realize that for some people it may be more palatable to blame the French for the infiltration of such wayward thinking! I say that tongue-in-cheek, of course.

I have found Graf's approach regarding literary references to magic and their exploitation by the historian of religion as having surprisingly developed along lines similar to my own. Let me offer a general illustration. Among the sources one typically identifies as pertinent to the history of Levantine religions is the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, it is an unfortunate set of circumstances that the literary and ideological character of the biblical texts has not been adequately taken into account in reconstructions of religion or, more to the point, magic in early Canaanite and Israelite societies. For many, the Hebrew Bible remains *the* lens through which all other artifacts relevant to an investigation of the region's religion or magic are to be seen. One can

still read recent authors who, without further qualification, conclude that “the Hebrew religion had an aversion to divinatory and magical practices...” a statement narrowly based on nothing more than the biblical taboos against certain rites, and one that unjustifiably denigrates the other religions of the region. It goes without saying, one need only ask the obvious: if a biblical law prohibited a rite, does that not imply that someone was observing it? With that question as one’s starting point, a whole new world opens itself up for further inquiry. Having so said, I should add a disclaimer here. I am not advocating an approach that is aimed at placing all the regional religions of Ancient West Asia on the same level. What I am proposing is that our sources and methods be so placed. This would provide greater assurance that the similarities as well as the variabilities that undoubtedly characterize the religions of the Levant might evidence themselves in the *process* of investigation. Surely, this is to be preferred to an approach wherein the outcome is, and often has been, a foregone conclusion.

Allow me to address the question of who it was that participated in the practices banned or discouraged in the biblical traditions, for this question brings me to another topic regarding which I find Graf’s work most informative: the accusation of magic in antiquity. Graf’s data have led him to the conclusion that such accusations are often unfounded or misdirected, and not infrequently motivated by xenophobia or the quest to dominate (two sides of the same coin no doubt). As Graf most astutely illustrates, the legal cases of C. Furius Cresimus and Apuleius verify this social reality in his ancient world.⁴³ I dare say that a similar set of constructs can be structurally detected within my ancient world. The Hebrew Bible makes the repeated claim or accusation that the indigenous populations of Canaan were the ones to be blamed for illegitimate religious or, if you will, “magic-like” practices.

This is particularly insidious in the so-called deuteronomistic traditions, but by no means is it restricted to those. The deuteronomists make the case that the various practices they outlaw are those embraced by the local or indigenous populations whether they be Canaanites, Phoenicians, Arameans or the like. Upon closer examination however, the rhetorical dimensions of these claims can be, and have been, convincingly exposed. Contrary to such claims, such practices are equally if not distinctly Israelite in origin. In fact, it is more likely the case that these were the practices of contemporaries who

⁴³ Pp. 62-88.

lived *within* the author's social orbit or that of his ancestors. They belong to those other sectors competing for power and dominance in ancient Israelite society. Other biblical traditions concerning divination and magic would clearly point in this direction — and here I have in mind so-called legitimate practices associated with such divinatory and magic-like paraphernalia as the teraphim, the urim and thummim, and the ephod and the otherwise "magic-like" rituals given expression in the Elijah and Elisha narratives where dynamistic processes operate alongside legalistic ones.⁴⁴ To be sure, included in that complex of practices is the sorcerer or *mekasheph* — outlawed as he might have been within the social realities of his day, he was nevertheless an Israelite phenomenon. To whit, the foreign origins traditions were clearly an attempt at improvisation. The "us-versus-them" polarity evident in the biblical traditions does not reflect a social reality i.e., Israelites vs. Canaanites, but instead certain Israelites vs. other Israelites. Underlying the false accusation of Canaanite magic are the wider social realities of competing Israelite religious traditions and their respective groups.

There are many other observations and conclusions that Graf adeptly articulates: the central place of individual memory, prayer and special knowledge in the magician's ritual and communicative worlds, the identification of coercion as only one element of magic's complex ideology, and the emphasis on reversal as a characteristic of magical ritual over against civic religion. But a brief final comment will have to suffice; Graf identifies the emergence of a two-level cosmological system made up of high gods that the magician could address in order to influence the other group and the infernal gods as characterizing the single most important change in the development of ancient magic. What was formerly a homogeneous pantheon eventually manifests itself in the imperial period as an extremely hierarchical pantheon. What Graf observes is that this happened about the same time as another transformation took place: when the magician changed from his exclusive role as sorcerer bent on harming adversaries to a magician who sought special knowledge from the gods. This he suggests coincides with broader changes in society from an agonistic society in need of support in competition (hence sorcery) to a society in which competition becomes the prerogative of the elite (and

⁴⁴ Cf. 1 Kings 17-19, 2 Kings 2-4.

so sorcery as well) while the rest of society is forced to turn to the quest for spiritual well-being.⁴⁵

In ancient Israelite cultural history, the process might very well have moved in the opposite direction; from a hierarchical pantheon to what one scholar described as an empty heaven save for the one high god that remained. Moreover, in the exilic and post-exilic periods of Israelite society — that is, the 6th and 5th centuries BCE — such changes may have proceeded in the following direction: from a society in which competition was the prerogative of the elite (cf. e.g., the book of Amos) with the rest of society questing for spiritual well-being to an agonistic society that, in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile and the Pax Persica, was in dire need of support from competition (hence sorcery). What this might suggest as to the transformations that took place vis-à-vis the role of the magician are yet to be fully explored. In any case, references to sorcery definitely increase in texts from the latter end of the 6th century BCE. How is that for a “reversal of fortune”?

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COMMENT BY DAVID FRANKFURTER

Students of “magic” in the ancient world (and other cultures) constantly run up against the problem of what the term should be taken to mean. The two most typical uses of “magic” comprise: (a) a sub-category of ritual that (for some scholars) assumes the operation of certain powers or laws in nature, a supernatural cosmos distinct from that one called “religious,” and/or a private or esoteric domain of practice; and (b) an ancient pejorative category of varying scope. The first use is often called “etic” insofar as it functions as a heuristic category for the description of religious phenomena in general, the second “emic” insofar as it denotes an indigenous distinction of ritual spheres. Whereas the development and refinement of “etic” terminology is the proper domain of the history of religions and is in fact the only way

⁴⁵ P. 173.

that others' religious systems and attitudes can be interpreted coherently, historians of antiquity — particularly those working on the religious polemics and purges of the Roman and late antique eras — are (or should be) sensitive to ancient peoples' own tendency to divide religious behavior (and belief) into legitimate/illegitimate, public/covert, affirmative/subversive, elevated/base, and priestly/extra-priestly domains. Thus Fritz Graf has opted for a sense of "magic" that would "follow the terminological usage of a given culture."⁴⁶

Yet both "emic" and "etic" uses of "magic" have critical flaws. As an "etic" (second-order, descriptive) term, "magic" really does not describe an observably distinct sphere of ritual cross-culturally. One might attempt general definitions like "the exercise of a preternatural control over nature by human beings, with the assistance of forces more powerful than they," or "any rite that does not play a part in organized cult,"⁴⁷ or that sphere of ritual concerned with quotidian matters and with the direction of supernatural power. However, such distinctions can never be maintained in the field, as it were; and the best contemporary studies of "ritual power" in its quotidian or local domain show little distinctive value in the category of "magic." Instead, such studies demonstrate the overwhelming continuities of language, gesture, motivation, leadership, and ritual space across the domains once distinguished as "magical" and "religious."⁴⁸ "Magic," then, does not exist as a distinct phenomenon in cultures and it cannot be sustained as a descriptive category.⁴⁹

But as an "emic" term — an ethnoclassification — "magic" is no better. Redolent with the various semantic contributions of James Frazer, Harry Hou-

⁴⁶ P. 17.

⁴⁷ M. Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic* (New York 1972 [1902/3]) 24 and V. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton 1991) 13.

⁴⁸ Flint, *op cit.*, M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*. (San Francisco 1994), K.L. Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill and London 1996), L.K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca and London 1993), R.K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*. SAOC 54 (Chicago 1993), D. Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician,'" in P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg, eds., *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium. Studies in the History of Religions* 75 (Leiden 1997) 115-135.

⁴⁹ Cf. J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*. RGRW 129 (Leiden 1995) 13-27.

dini, and Aleister Crowley, this English hybrid of the Latin *magia* can hardly function in such an isolated sense as an indigenous category — any more than could “religion” or “prayer.” Indeed, it is the rare historian of “magic” who, despite all efforts to maintain a rigorously ethno-specific “magic,” does not lapse into a Frazerian perspective (conjuring a “magic world-view”) somewhere along the line, simply by force of the word’s history.⁵⁰ Retaining the original words untranslated — Latin *magia*, Greek *mageia*, Egyptian *hk3*, Hebrew *khesheph* or [the craft of the] *hartummim*, etc. — is certainly a giant step towards accuracy in capturing such indigenous categories in the ancient world. And yet, one is still dealing only with categories of ancient stereotyping — even abuse — and not in any way the self-consciousness of ancient religious practice. Nobody, that is, has ever considered her- or himself a practitioner of “magic” — that’s what the other person does.

In straining against this two-sided trap, then, Graf’s *Magic in the Ancient World* underlines the need for a particular type of descriptive word. Many cultures, we find, have vague distinctions between spheres of ritual activity that are not prescriptive in any way — indeed, they are invariably quite changeable over time and space.⁵¹ Often, but not always, these distinctions arise in situations of cultural encounter — urbanization, religious centralization, Christianization, Islamicization — when people may gather a certain self-consciousness about ritual activity and legitimacy.⁵² In a thirteenth-century village in Languedoc, France, for example, one Béatrice de Planissoles “distinguished between her devotion to the Virgin Mary, which she regarded as specifically religious, and the little purely magical devices, learned from some witch or baptized Jewess, which she used to help her win her lawsuits, to make her daughters’ love affairs prosper and to cure epilepsy.”⁵³

Furthermore, we often find that indigenous *ritual experts* — the mistresses and masters of divination and charms — make use of such indigenous

⁵⁰ D. Frankfurter, review of S. Garrett, “Luke’s *mageia* and Garrett’s ‘Magic’,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 47 (1993) 81-89.

⁵¹ Cf. V. Turner, “Witchcraft and Sorcery: Taxonomy versus Dynamics,” in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca and London 1967) 124-125, and Smith, note 49 above, 17-19.

⁵² Cf. R. Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* (Chicago and London 1941) 233-236, and Frankfurter, note 48 above.

⁵³ E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error* (New York 1978 [1975]) 296.

distinctions in order to establish what they themselves are not doing, or else to define the type of ritual or ritualist whose powers they themselves are averting or neutralizing: "By my aid" she might say, "you can resist black magic," or "we can find the witch who did this to you."⁵⁴ In more centralized cultures of antiquity (at least), priests and their institutions and guilds might develop the image of an illegitimate or subversive ritual sphere — witches, sorcerers — in order to claim ritual authority for themselves.⁵⁵ Cultures with any sense of the Alien and Exotic on the margins of their environments inevitably ascribe to those alien peoples an especially powerful and dangerous ritual expertise. As Malinowski's Trobrianders viewed neighboring island peoples as intrinsically prone to witchcraft and highland folk in Guatemala regard coast-dwellers as insidious witches⁵⁶, so Egyptian amulets might protect against the sorcery (*hk3*) of the Syrians, the Nubians, the Libyans, the Cushites, and the Shasuites.⁵⁷ In the Greco-Roman period, so Lucian, Heliodorus, and other ancient novelists make clear, an Egyptian priest who moved beyond his indigenous temple environment — to the polis or beyond — would be regarded as a *magos* of ambiguous, often fearsome, powers.⁵⁸

Here, then, is a range of possible uses of the idea of an "other" form of ritual, different from what "we" do, that extends from the vague terminological distinction to the utter polarization. In order to label this idea as it occurs cross-culturally we need a term akin to "magic" but more ironic, for it must

⁵⁴ Cf. K. Thomas, "The Relevance of Social Anthropology to the Historical Study of English Witchcraft," in M. Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*. ASA Monographs 9 (London 1971) 60-61, W. de Blécourt, "Witch Doctors, Soothsayers, and Priests: On Cunning Folk in European Historiography and Tradition," *Social History* 19 (1994) 285-303, J. Simpson, "Witches and Witchbusters," *Folklore* 107 (1996) 5-18.

⁵⁵ Cf. Tzvi Abusch, "The Demonic Image of the Witch in Standard Babylonian Literature: The Reworking of Popular Conceptions by Learned Exorcists," in J. Neusner, E.S. Frerichs, and P.V.M. Flesher, eds., *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and In Conflict* (New York 1989) 27-58.

⁵⁶ B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York 1961; repr. Prospect Heights IL 1984) 77 and 237-244, B. Saler, "Nagual, Witch, and Sorcerer in a Quiché Village," in J. Middleton, ed., *Magic, Witchcraft, and Curing* (Austin 1967) 86-87.

⁵⁷ B.M. 10587r, 70-75, in I.E.S. Edwards, *Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*. 2 vols. Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum 4 (London 1960) 1:38.

⁵⁸ Frankfurter, above n. 48.

capture the incipient polemic against what is being described *without suggesting the possibility that such a sphere of ritual ever existed historically and might therefore be described objectively*. "Sorcery" has often been used for this purpose, but it may restrict the indigenous conceptualization of "others'" ritual to hostile spells alone (which are, to be sure, the predominant activity of this imaginary realm). Perhaps "wizardry" is the best: untempered by any semantic tradition but the Arthurian, it suggests an "other" sphere of ritual that is appealingly esoteric, potentially subversive, and solely the perspective of the indigenous or biased person under examination.⁵⁹

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RESPONSE TO COMMENTS
FRITZ GRAF

(1) John Gager

John Gager focusses his attention on my use of the term magic — and rightly so. His main objection is to my choice of following (as rigidly as possible) the ancient ("emic") use of the term. This choice results from my desperation with earlier work in the field: there, the authors not only used the term in a way well removed from its ancient notions, they often did so without much thinking on this use. Thus, the value of the term as an analytical tool has become very problematical; most devastating, to my mind, was the indiscriminate transfer of the term from ancient (or our own) culture into non-European cultures — it did not only very often obscure the cultural facts in those cultures, it also had deleterious effects on the understanding of Graeco-Roman cultures. Just to give two examples. One still can read (and not only in handbooks) that Roman religion was more magical than religious, since it placed a high value on ritual — but even given that this were true (I doubt it anyway), a Roman would have been very baffled indeed

⁵⁹ J. Middleton and E.H. Winter, "Introduction," in J. Middleton and E.H. Winter, eds., *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (New York 1963) 3; Turner, above n. 51, 126.

about such an assertion, and to us, it obscures the access to understanding Roman ritualism.⁶⁰ — Among Hellenists, there exists a widespread belief that Helen used a magical potion to soothe the mood of Menelaus and Telemachus: in fact, when the two men were more distressed than manners would have allowed after reminiscing the Trojan war, she mixed them an Egyptian drink — and since to influence by material means the souls of other people is magic (and Egypt is the homeland of magic anyway), Helen uses magic here.⁶¹ This projects the notion of magic into a culture where it did not exist at all (and is done, I suspect sometimes, because of puritan prejudices against Helen and her skill at mixing exotic drinks).

But back to the main issue. To start with, I would discard two minor points. (1) In the citation about Usener, I use the term as Usener used it: the passage says nothing about my ordinary use. As to the other two citations, I do not think that magic and religion are interchangeable: both underscore the fact that the (descriptive) term religion contains changing fields of normatively defined bits of magic; if there is a problem there, it has to do with the problem that maybe religion cannot be normatively defined either. — (2) I fully agree with the fact that there existed a positively connotated use of *mageia* as well — and not only in Philo or Apuleius: already in the Aristotelian (or Pseudo-Aristotelian) treatise *About the Magoi* we find the remark: “The Persian magoi do not use *mageia*” — i.e. they are no sorcerers.⁶² But there is a snag with all (or the overwhelming majority of) such uses: they set themselves polemically apart from the ordinary use of *mageia* in the society — witness Philo’s term “true *mageia*”.⁶³ Thus, they are just inversed mirror-images of the term and as thus are still valuable to illustrate the overall “emic” meaning.

The rest is more serious, and I fully agree with Gager that there is no satisfying way out. My use of the term *mageia* had the advantage that it opened the way to understanding the change of paradigm under way in the fifth and early fourth centuries, and the changes that followed in later epochs. By the Hellenistic period, that new notion had left philosophical, elitist circles; by the time of Augustus, the Roman state took it over in

⁶⁰ As did, to name just one author of an entire generation, H.J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion* (London 1948).

⁶¹ Homer, *Odyssey* IV 220-232.

⁶² Aristotle, Frg. 36 Rose.

⁶³ Philo, *De specialibus Legibus* III100 *alēthē magikē*.

order to exclude unwanted religious phenomena from what the state defined as religion, and after Constantine, the Christian emperors undertook a new definition of the term to suit their own claim (and the claim of the bishops) to monopolize knowledge.⁶⁴ All this — major changes of society's way to look at religion and to define its territory, around whose borderline the jungle of magic begins — would have been rather invisible when using a predefined modern term. The problems begin when trying to use the term in a descriptive way: in a way, to use a normative term in a descriptive way is always short of squaring a circle. I tried to do so by carefully extrapolating from the contemporary use and at the same time giving signals of caution.

Take the question of Athenian binding spells, which I include under the heading of *mageia*. Here, Plato is my witness: all this, he repeats, is punishable sorcery. This, at first glance, seems to have been Plato's personal view, given the many *tabulae defixionis* from Athenian contexts, many of them with upper class names on them. But there are indications that the negative view was not only Plato's: other Greek poleis at that time had legislation against it, and there might even be a testimony of an Athenian indictment for a love spell.⁶⁵ In fact, what I do is to take the emic term at a given time and use it as an etic one — since extrapolating it to phenomena that were not generally agreed to fall under its meaning is an appropriation of a term into one's own scientific language. This gives me a flexible tool of analysis because the content of the term changes over time. I can see only one alternative. Redefining the term magic according our own needs is certainly no way out, because in doing so we overlook the nuances in the actual facts and are liable to confuse our terminology and theirs. The way out, rather, would be a terminology at two levels: a rigid application of the indigenous normative term *mageia* where it applies, and a rigid use of an entirely new word for the rest. The drawback is a rather hermetic language: communication always suffers under those circumstances, and since I firmly believe in communication and the need to abstain from hermetic language, I chose my way out.

(2) Martha Himmelfarb

Martha Himmelfarb evokes two major topics for debate. (1) The first is the problem of Graeco-Roman versus Ancient World. My book concentrates

⁶⁴ See the sources collected in F.E. Shlosser, "Pagans into magicians," *Byzantinonoslavica* 52 (1991) 49-53.

⁶⁵ Graf, p. 35; see also Demosthenes XIX 281 and schol. ad loc.

very much on the Greeks and the Romans (or rather on the writers and speakers of Greek and Latin, which is not the same, at least in later epochs). It concentrates on those two cultures not just because I am a classicist, but (and here I come back to the problem of terminology) because it was those two cultures that developed the term magic with many of its modern connotations; as Himmelfarb justly remarks, in Egypt the phenomenon would present itself in a very different way, as it would in Ancient Mesopotamia: magic in the sense the Greeks understood the term from the 5th century onward did not exist, or only very late and under Greek or Roman influence. Therefore, the Near Eastern cultures are treated as areas from which the Greeks took over elements of the rituals and, to a lesser degree, of the ideology. And given this emphasis on ritual, it is Mesopotamia and Assyria where one has to look for phenomena which might have influenced the rites of classical and Hellenistic Greece. Egyptian rituals, as Ritner has shown, became influential only in the stage of “international” magic of the Imperial epoch, as represented in the magical papyri⁶⁶, and the evidence for Egypt as the home and cradle of magic begins not very much earlier and gains momentum only in the Imperial epoch — but as late an author as Iamblichus still insists, when talking about the *voces magicae*, that they were both Egyptian and Assyrian.⁶⁷ And while the role of Egypt has been clear for quite a while (at least after the first, very Hellenocentric interpretations of the Greek magical papyri), the Mesopotamian-Assyrian world has never really been drawn into the world of Greek sorcerers — Burkert, who did pioneering work as to the Oriental connection, confined himself to the Archaic Age, as did Faraone in his researches on statues.⁶⁸ This explains my bias — and Hellenistic Greeks would have agreed: where we have evidence as to the origin of powerful magicians (like in Theocritus’ 2nd *Idyll*), they are called Chaldaeans, that is Assyrians. As to Persia, the home of the *magoi*: that was a derivation which functioned on an ideological basis only and had no foundation in actual fact

⁶⁶ R. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Chicago 1993), see also his “Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 18,5 (Berlin 1995), 3333-3379.

⁶⁷ Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* VII 4.

⁶⁸ W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, Mass. 1992; German ed. 1984); Ch.A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses. Guardian Statuettes in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York and Oxford 1992).

(or perhaps only as far as Assyrians and Chaldaeans were — politically — Persians as well before the epoch of Alexander the Great: when Heraclitus or the Derveni papyri speak about rituals of the *magoi*⁶⁹, they just might have in mind any Oriental from the lands of the King of Kings). Another matter is Jewish magic (as would have been Coptic magic): these phenomena are indebted to the internationalization of the PGM-type of magic: the *Sepher ha-Razim*, beyond its basic structure of an ascent text, contains many recipes whose closeness to the PGM is self-evident.⁷⁰ And had I a more thorough familiarity with the history of late antique and medieval Judaism, nobody would have stopped me from working on it — but human resources are restricted. Perhaps one has even to look much further than the *Sepher ha-Razim* or the *hekhalot* texts: I suspect that the Jewish tradition must have played an immensely and not yet fully understood role in the tradition of magical texts after antiquity as well. My suspicion is based upon a personal experience: when working in the University Library of Crakow, I chanced upon an astrological manuscript written in Prag in 1388; in the empty spaces between the astrological charts, it contains a series of Latin spells which again come very close to what I knew about the PGM; and when thinking about possible connections between these two worlds, Jewish medieval traditions are at least as reasonable a guess as anything. So here is a field of research still wide open, and having all the fascination one might wish for.

I could not agree more with what Himmelfarb says about the aims of the PGM — without, though, giving in on my political and sociological explanation. Couched in terms of religious history, it is indeed the quest for the Divine, for bridging the widening gap between humans and gods which fires much of what is going on at least in many of the magical papyri (and outside as well): a promise like the one in PGM I 39 — “you will come face to face as companion to the god” is typical, as is the claim of the practitioner to be such and such a high god, or at least Moses, God’s intimate. And since theurgy, the philosophical twin of magic, might seem an easy way to reach that goal and an individual way besides, the Christian fathers opposed it fiercely: their own way was less easy (not arrogant, *superbus*, as Augustine

⁶⁹ Heraclitus, frg. 14; the new Derveni fragment in A. Laks and G. Most, eds., *Studies in the Derveni Papyrus* (Oxford 1997) 110-117 (K. Tsantsanoglou).

⁷⁰ For the text M. Margalioth, *Sepher ha-razim* (Jerusalem 1966); for a translation M.A. Morgan, *Sepher ha-razim. The Book of the Mysteries* (Chico, Cal. 1983).

has it, but submissive, *humilis*⁷¹), and it was not left to individual choice — but the goal, in a way, as the goal of gnosticism, was not that much apart. So far, there could not be more agreement between us, and I think I lean towards such a reading in my book as well. The question rather is whether this answer excludes an answer of the type I brought forward: what conditions and causes such widespread individual aims — why this general quest for divinity? If one does not wish to have recourse to psychology (as E.R. Dodds did two generations ago), a sociopolitical answer might be as good a shot in the dark as any; and given the all-pervading presence of the late antique political system, I wonder whether the hekhalot literature would have been entirely immune against it (even though — or perhaps just because — as Michael Swartz cautiously put it, “little is known about the social environment of the rabbinic estate in late antiquity”⁷²).

(3) Marvin Meyer

Marvin Meyer’s response, again, asks some very important and not always easily answerable questions. I answer them in order.

(1) *Paradigm*: Some points have already been touched upon in the response of Gager and in my answer to him — especially the problem of negative associations of the term (not necessarily xenophobic, although that might sometimes be part of the parcel) or its contrary, the positive evaluation of Persia. As to the relationship between Greece and Egypt, I agree with the outline which Meyer sketched: the very fundamental difference is the way the two cultures dealt with the phenomenon of *heka* and *mageia* respectively. Although this, of course, leads to the obvious question as to what happened when the two conceptions came into contact — in Hellenistic and especially Roman time. One answer to this has been tried in a conference paper by David Frankfurter: he assumes that the practice of Egyptian magic — *heka* — remained the province of the temple priests in late Egypt, and that they peddled their art to Greeks and Romans who looked at the thing with a fascination generated by the irresistible combination of exotic origin and forbidden fruit — which those priests exploited. Whatever the role of the temple-priests: some-

⁷¹ See the new sermon, F. Dolbeau, “Nouveaux sermons de saint Augustin pour la conversion des païens et des donatistes (IV),” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 26 (1992) 69-141, esp. par. 62, line 1503.

⁷² M.D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic. Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton 1996) 4.

thing like that went on in this contact. This explains both the importance the papyrus books evidently gained in later antiquity and the official intolerance against them (Augustus, Paul, the emperor Constantius and the authorities of 6th century Beirut had them burned). I again agree with what Meyer sees as the role of Christianity. This role becomes very clear in an influential church teacher like Augustine who several times discusses the question⁷³ and being Augustine, he clearly speaks up what he means. *Magia* and its two sisters *theurgia* and *goētia* are in some respect very close to what Christianity aims at — the personal contact with the divine; but it does so in an entirely perverse fashion, adoring the Fallen Angels instead of the True ones, relying on ritual instead of faith, and acting out of arrogance instead of submission. Marie Th. Fögen showed how this position of the church went together with the position of the emperors against divination which they understood as a threat to their monopolistic approach to divine knowledge:⁷⁴ this lies at the heart of the late antique equation of divination and magic. Thus, this Christian discourse contributed centrally to a more violent rejection of magic.

(2) *Center and periphery* is an intriguing matter indeed. In a way, the Maussian model works best in those cases I used it for: to make understandable why a group makes someone into a sorcerer — whether he actually did practice magic or not is not an issue in this: it is assumed as given. The problems begin as soon as one is concerned not with the magician but with magic, as the neat example of the Virgin Mary shows: is the prayer magic, the veneration of her in a church religion? The answer has to come from another differentiation. J.Z. Smith insisted that only magicians exist, magic does not⁷⁵, and this is the vital insight: magic being a ritual technique, it could be used both by persons at the center and in the periphery. Even more: the rich Athenians which used the binding spells and voodoo dolls we have were at the center of the polis, but the seers and priests who sold them their spells clearly were not. And that introduces another differentiation. Frankfurter's temple-priests are in the centre in their own, Egyptian setting, while they are marginals for those Roman lovers of the exotic who ask for their services and who may

⁷³ Esp. in *De Civitate Dei* bk. X and the new sermon from the Mainz manuscript, above n. 71.

⁷⁴ M.Th. Fögen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager. Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt a. M. 1993).

⁷⁵ J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden 1995) 18.

either idealize them (as in Heliodorus' novel) or burn them as wizards. Or, more banal: center and periphery are always a matter of perspective, they are not universal givens.

(3) *Mystery cults and secrecy*: I would prefer to leave the Mithras Liturgy out of the discussion here — I do not think that this text has anything to do with the mysteries of Mithras, and I am very tempted by the suggestion of S. Iles Johnston that it is a theurgical text:⁷⁶ many details fit much better. As to Christianity, it certainly shared a series of traits with the mystery cults (as those scholars at the turn of the century perceived who wished to derive Christianity from mystery cults and by doing so do away with the Christian claim to revelation, in a neat strategy of historical relativity). But there are important differences as well: the insistence on revelation and the concomitant conviction of possessing the truth gave Christianity a combativeness which was lacking in the mystery cults, and the same exclusiveness led to the creation of social structures that were absent in the mystery groups: none of the many mystery cults developed a social system and a habit of living closely together that were characteristic for early Christianity. — More intriguing is the problem of secrecy. I very much like the suggestion that one had to advertise a curse in order to make it effective, and there is evidence to support it both in other cultures and in Greece: Plato talks about the voodoo dolls found on the graves of one's parents or under one's doorstep, which created fear of being attacked by a *defixio*.⁷⁷ But this is an isolated instance, and at least the PGM insist that the curse tablets have to be hidden away lest they be found and destroyed. And it is something different from the secrecy surrounding the action of the sorcerer himself: he has to keep some parts of his art secret, and he has to stay secret himself, even when advertising his action; secrecy is part of his prestige.

(4) *Coercion*: here I only can thank Meyer for the splendid examples of humility in Christian magicians.⁷⁸ It might be worth, though, to underscore that coercion becomes an issue only in the light of a specific theology — a theology which understands the divine as almighty and well beyond the

⁷⁶ In “Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in its Cultural Milieu,” in P. Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg, eds., *Envisioning Magic* (Leiden 1997). 181-183 with n. 54.

⁷⁷ Plato, *Laws* XI 933AB.

⁷⁸ See, for comparable examples in the PGM, my “Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual,” in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera* (New York and Oxford 1991) 188-213.

arrogant attack of human sorcerers or human coercion. This might be given in Platonism and in Christianity, but it is, as you know, not at all given in paganism as such — the hero in Aristophanes' *Birds* is able to force the gods to his help by depriving them from the nourishing sacrifices, and he is not blamed for that but praised.

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BOOK REVIEWS

MATTHEW DILLON, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece* — London and New York: Routledge 1997 (308 p.) ISBN 0-415-12775-0 (cloth) £40.00.

Those who are interested in the phenomenon of pilgrimage in Greek antiquity will find a large amount of material extensively presented in Dillon's book. Since his definition of the subject is rather broad — including all journeys for religious reasons to sites outside their own residence — pilgrimage appears as an essential feature of Greek religion, being linked to all great festivals of trans-local importance (and also to some local ones), to sportive contests, and to oracles and healing cures. Focussing many cultic events from this rather unusual point of view, the author provides us with many testimonies who shed a new light on a widespread religious practice.

Besides private activities of persons going to partake in a religious ceremony, the Greek world knew "theoroi", official delegations, in a twofold sense: herolds, sent out by the polis organizing the festival, who proclaimed a sacred truce and invited other towns to the event, and "official pilgrims", visiting the festivals, bringing sacrifices for the sake of their hometown. We get solid information about both institutions and the organizational requirements around them which enables us to ask some further questions, for example about the importance of the theoroi for cultural transfer (concerning the knowledge about local myths and rituals) and about the integration of "official pilgrimage" in the initiatory system.

Of special interest, too, is the presentation of the material conditions which had to be fulfilled in order to deal with the needs of pilgrims, both public and private, and — for gender studies — a chapter about female pilgrims.

The author is less convincing in interpreting the festivals — goals of the journey — themselves, often following obsolete paradigms (p. ex. taking myths about former human sacrifice literally). A student of the science of religion would miss a discussion of general theories about pilgrimage such as those advanced by anthropological studies following the paradigm of Victor Turner. But even if Dillon does not transgress his scientific horizon, he enables interdisciplinary research, making access to his area very comfortable for non-classicist readers, providing them with translations and transcriptions,

so that every student interested in the subject finds a useful guide to the information available about Greek pilgrimage.

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DOROTHEA BAUDY

IAIN GARDNER, *The Kephalia of the Teacher. The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentary* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 37) — Leiden: E.J. Brill 1995 (XLVI + 307 p.) ISBN 90-04-10248-5 (cloth) US\$ 97.25.

KURT RUDOLPH, *Gnosis und spätantike Religionsgeschichte. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 42) — Leiden: E.J. Brill 1996 (XII + 783 p., register) ISBN 90-04-10625-1 (cloth) US\$ 274.25.

PAUL MIRECKI and JASON BEDUHN (Eds.), *Emerging from Darkness. Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 43) — Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997 (294 p., illustrations) ISBN 90-04-10760-6 (cloth) US\$ 116.25.

The three volumes reviewed here are very different in nature: one offers the translation of a classical but ill-known text, the second represents an impressive collection of articles by the dean of Gnostic, Mandean, and Manichaean studies, while the third, edited by two young scholars, includes papers read at a conference devoted to new discoveries of Manichaean sources. The three volumes, however, published in close sequence in what is the most important series devoted to Gnosticism and Manichaeism, reflect rather well the present state of Manichaean studies.

This state is, in a word, surprisingly healthy. Scholarly fashions do not treat Manichaeism well. Manichaeism has no lobby. It does not appear to be easily amenable to feminist or other politically or culturally correct interpretations. For those interested in titillating heresy, Gnosticism is more immediately present, and the Nag Hammadi texts also offer possible variants of Jesus's *ipsissima verba*. Last not least, the state of the sources, and the multiplicity of difficult or dead (or both) languages involved, would seem to make the study of Manichaeism an exercise in scholarly masochism (to be sure, not an unknown phenomenon).

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Since Isaac de Beausobre and his *Histoire de Manichée et du Manichéisme* (1734-1739), Berlin has remained the undisputed center of Manichaean studies. In the present century, this status is due mainly to the treasures brought back from central Asian expeditions at the turn of the century. Working for the last generation at the Berlin Academy of Sciences, in the late D.D.R., Peter Zieme and Werner Sundermann, in particular, were lonely and silently busy on their pioneering work, on (respectively) the Turkic and Iranian texts. In the rest of the world, most scholars seem to have been content, besides Augustine, with commenting on the *Cologne Mani Codex*, after its two editors, having moved from Cologne to America, had edited and translated the Greek text of the smallest codex from Antiquity. All in all, few scholars seem to have kept any interest in Manichaeism, and a perusal of dissertation titles written in the United States in the last generation, for instance, would easily lead to the conclusion that Manichaean studies were as dead as the religion of light itself.

Obviously, and happily, this state of affairs seems to be changing. For the historian of religion, indeed, Manichaeism is a phenomenon of no marginal importance. It is only the distortion due to the sheer size of New Testament studies in traditionally Protestant countries that made Gnosis be studied, since the Nag Hammadi discovery, in isolation from both Mandaeism and Manichaeism. The unique importance of Kurt Rudolph's career, much of it under the cloak of Orientalist philology at Karl-Marx Universität in Leipzig, is revealed in the tripartite division of his volume of essays (another one, on more general problems of the history of religions, was published a few years ago by the same publisher): *Gnostica, Mandaica, Manichaeica*. True, one can cut a cake in different ways, and there is a limit to the number of source languages a scholar, even gifted, even audacious, can be expected to muster. But re-reading Rudolph's pieces, one cannot but question the value of much of what is written from the perspective of religious history on the Nag Hammadi texts or on Christian Gnosticism, in the complete ignorance of the Mandean and the Manichaean texts. The new interest, perhaps even the Renaissance, which can be discerned in Manichaean studies, however, seems to have not yet reached the almost virgin shores of Mandean territory. Very few scholars seem to devote any kind of interest to Mandean texts. One wonders why. After all, the sources there are all in a (strange) brand of Aramaic, a relatively accessible language. I daresay this should be the

next station in the scholarly *Reconquista* of the lost marshes of Near Eastern dualist movements.

During the last fifteen years, Iain Gardner has done much to encourage Manichaean studies among younger scholars. In translating into English one of the most important theological texts of early Manichaeism (which had existed for a long time in German translation), he has accomplished a good deed, which should activate fresh research. He has added useful summaries before each *Kephalaion*. The commentary, however, remains minimal. It is to be hoped that this publication will encourage young scholars to work on religio-historical analyses of this fundamental text, which remains an almost untapped source of knowledge for the early doctrinal developments.

The eighth articles in the volume edited by Mirecki and BeDuhn deal with the different fronts of Manichaean research today. It includes an essay on magic, one on the Tebessa Codex, a Manichaean treatise on biblical exegesis, a progress report, by Iain Gardner, on the archeological discovery, a few years ago, of Manichaean remains at Kellis, in Egypt, and a study by John Reeves showing how to use Ephrem's writings as a source on Manichaeism. As he rightly points out, Ephrem's Syriac is closer to Mani's own mother tongue than all the other languages in which Manichaean texts have reached us. In their introductory chapter, the editors analyze the state of Manichaean studies at the end of the century. I think this state abodes well for the next millenium.

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GUY G. STROUMSA

BEN H.L. VAN GESSEL, *Onomasticon of the Hittite Pantheon*. Two Parts (Handbook of Oriental Studies. The Near and Middle East, 33) — Leiden, E.J. Brill 1998 (xxiii + 1069 p.) ISBN 90-04-10809-2 (cloth) US\$ 256.00.

In 1947 E. Laroche published his "Recherche sur les noms des dieux hittites"¹ covering 600 divine names or attributes found in the bulk of texts from the excavations in the Hittite capital Hattuša dating roughly from the 16th to 13th century BCE. Fifty years later and due to ongoing excavations in

¹ In: *Revue Hittite et Asianique* VII/46 (1947) 7-139.

Hattuša and to tablets found occasionally outside the capital our knowledge has increased. Ben van Gessel's book has to deal with about 950 entries thus coming close to the Hittite self-representation which often speaks of the "Thousand gods of the Hittites" (cf. pp. 978-979). About 90% of the names are written in Hittite spelling while the rest follows Sumerographic or Akkadographic orthography. Each entry first comprises all occurrences of the name in the presently published — and to a minor degree unpublished — Hittite texts, arranging the references according to grammatical use and the specific linguistic context. A further sub-section of each entry gives some additional information about temples, priests, cultic places or festivals of the god. It is within this section where the reader gets a little impression of the "character" of a certain god. Only a limited number of the thousand gods of the Hittites are of general importance — they cover more than five pages in the book, e.g.: Ala (p. 9-14), Hašammili (p. 98-103), Hepat (p. 115-147), Išhara (p. 196-202), Kattahha (p. 228-235), Gulša (p. 249-255), Kumarbi (p. 256-262), Lilluri (p. 284-289), Mezzulla (p. 302-307), Šarruma (p. 376-382), Šaušga (p. 385-394), Telipinu (p. 466-478), Teššub (p. 482-508), É.A. (p. 613-620), IŠKUR (p. 643-678), LAMMA (p. 681-714), DINGIR.MAH (p. 718-729), U (p. 749-835), UTU (p. 844-904), IŠSTAR (p. 923-951), ZABABA (p. 961-969). — Other gods appear only once in our texts, e.g. the following nine among the 37 names beginning with "M" (pp. 294-320): Mammi, Manari, Manuzunna, Mariya, Miyanna, Mimiyanta, Minkišuri, Mišini, Muhili.

After this overview of the contents of the book I want to emphasize to the readers of *Numen* that van Gessel's onomasticon is not a dictionary of Hittite gods, their myths, cults or history but an extremely useful working and research tool for everyone concerned with "Religion in Hittite Anatolia".² On a methodological level two things are important.

1) How does such a huge pantheon form? It is on the one hand surely the result of historical developments of Hittite political domination in Anatolia and also the result of theological developments favored by the cultic staff at the main temples. But van Gessel's book makes further investigations easier

² This is the title of my review of V. Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*, Leiden 1994 in *Numen* 44 (1997) 74-90. — The study by Haas and van Gessel's book together will surely serve the next generation of historians of Anatolian religions to try to shape the *history* of these religions.

when asking for the relevant “cultic strata” in Anatolia because he briefly calls to our attention whether a divine name occurs in a Hittite, Hurrian, Hattian, Luwian or Palaic linguistic or cultural context. In recent years some studies have already laid their focus on the Hurrian or the Hattian cultic sphere³ but e.g. Luwian religion proper had been neglected to some degree,⁴ though there are many Luwian sources. B. van Gessel is well aware of these studies partly incorporating their results in his book thus encouraging the growth of our knowledge.

2) As mentioned above the cataloging of many gods covers several pages; this facilitates a better reconstruction of the history of these gods in the future. In the nineties several monograph books on special gods had already been published:⁵ on LAMMA and other tutelary deities; on Išhara, a Syrian deity having gained importance also in the Hittite empire; on Hepat, the dominant female western Hurrian deity; on aspects of the male and female Sungods, written UTU; on a local weathergod, namely IŠKUR of Kuliwišna. It may be hoped that van Gessel’s onomasticon will stimulate further monographic research of other major gods, e.g. of Kumarbi or Telipinu focussing also on the mythological traditions connected with each of them or of other gods like Šarruma, who is often closely connected with Hepat and Teššub, and Mezzulla, the daughter of the sungoddess of Arinna. Another important — but due to the huge bulk of relevant materials — also difficult study could concentrate on *all* the weathergods (IŠKUR, U, Teššub) or on *all* the sungods

³ J. Klinger, *Untersuchungen zur Rekonstruktion der hattischen Kultschicht*, Wiesbaden 1996, 131-181 under the heading “Pantheon und Mythologie der Hattier”; M. Popko, *Religions of Asia Minor*, Warzaw 1995, 96-102 under the heading “Beliefs of the Hurrians of Anatolia”; cf. also Popko’s remarks on the Hurrian elements in “Hittite” Anatolia in his review of Haas’ *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion*, in: *OLZ* 90 (1995) 469-483, 480-482.

⁴ Cf. also Popko, *Religions* 91 note 244: “Luwian religion has not been studied yet in a separate monograph; its mostly quite superficial descriptions have been published on the margins of studies on Hittite religion as a rule.”

⁵ G. McMahon, *The Hittite State Cult of the Tutelary Deities*, Chicago 1991; D. Prechel, *Die Göttin Išhara. Ein Beitrag zur altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, Münster 1996, M.-C. Trémouille, ⁴*Hebat. Une divinité Syro-Anatolienne*, Firenze 1997; D. Yoshida, *Untersuchungen zu den Sonnengottheiten bei den Hethitern*, Heidelberg 1996; J. Glockner, *Das Ritual für den Wettergott von Kuliwišna*, Firenze 1997.

and sungoddesses including their local manifestations. Questions which come to the mind of the historian of religions are the following ones: What do Hittites think of IŠKUR, U and Tešub? In what way can these names (or casually better: graphic representations) be interchanged? Sometimes without doubt they can! What is the relationship of these weathergods to each other? Who is the “mightier” one? And for whom? On a general level regarding all the gods and their cults: How can we work out “theologies” of the Hittites — official and local ones?

For the moment we are far from answering such questions. But besides editing texts and finding new texts as recently at Ortaköy and Kuşaklı⁶ in Turkey which had not been at van Gessel’s disposal but which — of course — also include divine names van Gessel’s book is one of the main auxiliary materials for further research. Presently nobody can do without it when being concerned with Anatolian religions in the second millennium BCE because — as in a generalistic way during the founding period of *Religionswissenschaft* — philological and historical research are still the basic prerogatives for studying Anatolian religions.

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CARL OLSON, *They Indian Renouncer and Postmodern Poison: A Cross Cultural Encounter* — New York etc.: Peter Lang 1997 (xvi + 367 p.)
ISBN 3-8204-3022 (cloth) DM 100.00.

If one asks a scholar of Indian history and culture “What do Indian ascetics and postmodernism have in common?”, she or he would in most cases answer: “nothing!” or “I don’t know”. Carl Olson’s book is concerned with exactly this question, and his main point is that the Indian “renouncer

⁶ The edition of texts found at Kuşaklı in 1994 and 1995 has been released simultaneously with van Gessel’s onomasticon: G. Wilhelm, *Kuşaklı-Sarissa I/1. Keilschrifttexte aus Gebäude A*, Rahden/Westfalen 1997. The texts from Ortaköy found since 1990 are still waiting for publication; some preliminary informations have been given by A. Stiel, “Ortaköy. Eine hethitische Stadt mit hethitischen und hurritischen Tontafelentdeckungen,” in: H. Otten et al. (eds.), *Hittite and Other Anatolian and Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Sedat Alp*, Ankara 1992, 487-491.

and the postmodernist share liminality because both are marginal beings in comparison to individuals in the established social structure" (p. 299). O. describes the Indian renouncer as a figure that transforms himself and assumes various roles in his search for liberation. He analyzes the renouncer from a number of perspectives and thus avoids the reductionism which simplifies a complex character so important for the history of India.

After the Introduction (ch. 1), which covers the origins of asceticism, the renouncer's way of life and the types of renouncers, follow six chapters on fascinating and important topics related to the analysis of renunciation: "The face of the stranger and society" (ch. 2), "The heroic narrative of the renouncer" (ch. 3), "The renouncer and violence" (ch. 4), "Masochism and self-sacrifice" (ch. 5), "Eroticism, power, and androgyny" (ch. 6), and "Narcissistic wound" (ch. 7). In a concluding chapter ("The renouncer and culture"), O. tries to demonstrate again that the type of the Indian renouncer is essential for transformative processes in culture. The book contains an extensive, but not comprehensive (see below) bibliography as well as an index.

The comparison of the Indian renouncer with postmodernists might or might not enlighten the reader. Much depends on whether one accepts that intellectual bias or fashion. (Are we not already in a period of post-postmodernism?) But much depends also on his acceptance of phrases such as "Like the Indian renouncer, some postmodernists conceive of themselves following a wandering life-style" (p. 18) or "With its emphasis on interrelatedness, flux, cyclic time, and impermanence, the world of [Mark C.] Taylor shares a number of features with Nikaya Buddhism" (p. 23). Analogies on the surface do not necessarily correspond with similarities or identities on deeper levels. Moreover, O. himself seems to be sceptical about postmodernist approaches when he criticizes Ronald Inden's book *Imagining India* (Oxford 1990): "A major problem with Inden's work is that his postmodern approach and deconstructive method are as foreign to Indian culture as the false portrait of the modern Indologist" (p. 203).

Several empirical short-comings count more seriously. Thus, O. almost neglects the type of Indian renouncer that is organized in sects (*pantha*, *samgha* etc.) though the vast majority have lived and still do live in such communities while the ascetic living in solitude is a rare exemption. Since O. tends to prefer an idealized view of Indian asceticism on the basis of

normative Sanskrit sources, he neglects empirical field-work and the social context in which ascetics live.

In some regards, O. did not consider major publications which are directly related to his subject. Thus, concerning the origin of Indian renunciation: J. Bronkhorst (*The Two Sources of Indian Asceticism*. Bern 1993), concerning theories of narcissism: J.M. Masson (*The Oceanic Feeling: The Origins of Religious Sentiment in Ancient India*. Dordrecht, Boston 1980), or S. Kakar (*The Inner World: A Psycho-analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*. Delhi 1978). Regarding the otherwise interesting and comparatively new aspect of "stranger and society", the important Indian term for stranger, *mlechha*, is not discussed, nor the figure of the trickster as another character of living liminality. Max Weber's seminal study on innerworldy and outerworldy asceticism is not even mentioned.

The book contains a number of technical insufficiencies. Diacritical marks are not used, and yet is the spelling of Sanskrit terms often incorrect: e.g., p. 14: *agnihorta* (for *agnihotra*) p. 19: *kutcaka* for (*kuṭicaka*), which I could not verify in the Poona edition of the *Mahābhārata* (13.141.89) given by O., p. 85: *Anuasana Parvan* for *Anuśāsana Parvan* etc. It is — in an age of computerization — difficult to understand O.'s justification for the absence of diacritical marks: "Due to the incompatibility of the Sanskrit program that I used with my computer, I have reluctantly had to dispense with proper transliteration and diacritical marks, although I have rendered r as ri. I have also rendered the Sanskrit consonants s and s as sh" (sic!, p. xvi f.). If this was the problem, the publisher should have helped the author. Moreover, the form of abbreviating and quoting is inconsistent, the listing of full bibliographical data both in endnotes and in the bibliography is redundant.

In short, I again quote O.: "Scholars in the field of the history of religions or Indology will not find anything especially new in this book because I did not attempt to break open new and unexplored areas of Indian religion. I rather tried to take available material and rework it by asking new questions about the life of the renouncer and framing the answers in a contemporary manner" (p. xv).

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AXEL MICHAELS

JAMIE HUBBARD and PAUL L. SWANSON (Eds.), *Pruning the Bodhi Tree. The Storm over Critical Buddhism* — Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 1997 (XXVIII + 515) ISBN 0-8248-1908-X (cloth) \$45.00; ISBN 0-8248-1949-7 (paper) \$22.95.

Plus que ça change plus c'est la même chose. What is "true" Christianity (or Judaism or Islam etc.)? The Holy Inquisition as well as Martin Luther held strong views on this kind of question. St. Thomas was sure that Aristotle helped him to define true Christianity much as the contemporary Latin American "Liberation" theologians acknowledge their indebtedness to Marx. Later generations of scholars did not use the adjective "true" but sought *das Wesen* of the religion they were dealing with or even *Das Wesen der Religion* as such. Historians of religion were genuinely exercised by the same problem, though for them it was of a definitional rather than theological nature. Whilst Lourdes, Fatima and Guadeloupe are evidently Christian in a sense in which also Lutherans and Methodists presumably are, does this also apply to Jehovah's witnesses, Mormons or the Rev. Moon's Unification Church? With regard to Buddhism (allowing — *pace* W. Cantwell Smith — this kind of noun for the sake of convenience) the question was already raised by 19th cent. western scholarship in connection with Mahayana v. Theravada. The legitimacy of the former was denied at the time by what might be called the Pali Text Society Buddhism with the same vehemence as it is today by its Ceylonese "Buddhist Publication Society" version. Cf. e.g., T.W. Rhys Davids' "corrupt Buddhism", "sickly imaginations", "debasing belief", and today the Ven. Bhikku Bodhi's cutting polemics against all nonduality thought including, of course, Zen. If the latter's writings are not anthologized or even taken note of in the volume under review, focussed as it is not on Mahayana in general but more specifically on Japanese Buddhism, it is because they emanate from a Theravada source. The problem of autodesignation *versus* allo-designation and of the criteria that are (or may be) invoked is discussed by many authors today as if they were innovative (for otherwise they wouldn't be "post-modern" enough). It may therefore be apt to quote de la Vallée Poussin (1898): "On regarde d'habitude le Tantrisme idolâtre et superstitieux comme n'étant plus du Bouddhisme; on oublie que le Bouddhisme n'est pas séparable des bouddhistes et [qu'ils] étaient volontiers idolâtres, superstitieux ou métaphysiciens". The member groups of the "World Federation of Buddhists" have practically nothing in common but the veneration of (the word) Buddha. For the scholars who are

the subject of the book under review it is not so much the "Buddha" as the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada* on which "true Buddhism" depends.

But the context and terms of reference of this kind of debate have shifted considerably in the century since de la Vallée Poussin. Hence the outstanding importance of this volume for western readers also beyond the confines of Buddhology. The storm over what is called (or rather calls itself) "Critical Buddhism" is an internal storm not in a tea-cup but in a Mahayana basin, yet it goes far beyond it. In this respect it is also radically different from e.g. Bernard Faure's *Cultural Critique of Zen*. The main protagonists, Professors Hakamaya and Matsumoto, are not only top philological textualist scholars who have few equals but committed Buddhists and (in their view precisely because of this) also social activists. The debate on *hongaku shiso* (Original viz. Originary Enlightenment), Buddha Nature and related issues has already been briefly brought to the attention of readers of *NUMEN* (vol. 39, 1992, p. 129) and been presented at greater length by one of the editors of the volume under review in *NUMEN* vol. 40, 1993 (see also R. King in *NUMEN* vol. 42, 1995) and need not, therefore, be rehearsed once more.

In the West it was the fashion to hold the Bible and the dominion over the earth which it confers on man responsible for all environmental mayhem. Apologists argued that what actually happens in history may be a consequence of doctrinal positions (or their misinterpretation), though not a logical and necessary one. For Hakamaya, Matsumoto and their Mahayanist fellow critics, the currently accepted doctrinal traditions are in fact a betrayal of essential Buddhist teaching which demands critical discrimination both metaphysical and ethical, and concomitant respect for language. The doctrine of non-discrimination in fact promoted, under the guise of inherent enlightenment and Buddha-nature, social discrimination and worse. The supreme Japanese value of *wa* is meant to avoid confrontations. But truth and ethics are confrontational. Some aspects of this social criticism have already been highlighted by an earlier volume in this series, *Rude Awakening*, 1995, of which all that need be said here is that only Zen-fans who had been fast asleep also had to be awakened and rudely shocked into seeing the obvious. After all, the spiritual *Wahlverwandschaft* of the great gurus of the "Kyoto School" admired so much in the west on the one hand, and the Hitlerite Zen-archer Herrigel or the philosopher Heidegger philosophizing in his brown Nazi uniform is no surprise to readers of e.g. "the (in)famous *Chuokoron* 'Round Table'" (B. Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, 1991,

p. 21 n. 13). Fortunately the Hubbard/Swanson volume, whilst paying due attention to what might be called the Weberian aspect of the discussion i.e., the assumption that apparently abstruse doctrinal positions influence social realities, concentrates on the more strictly buddhological i.e. philological controversies. Regrettably the main protagonists in the debate, like ever so many others, badly misunderstand, in their enthusiasm for *engagement* and social activism, the meaning of Weber's call for value-free objectivity.

The translations of the most important texts of the main critics would by themselves justify this anthology. As a *donum superadditum* we are also given the editors' summaries (Hubbard's introduction and ch. 4, and Swanson's ch. 1) as well as samples of the critical examination of the "critical Buddhism" by highly competent western scholars, though some of these contributions are even more "sectarian" (Japanese Buddhist version) than the positions they address e.g., Sallie King's declaration, in a very scholarly but basically internal sectarian chapter, that the doctrine of Buddha Nature was "impeccably Buddhist". A good example of the value of these contributions is Ruben Habito's analysis of two 13th century texts exemplifying the complexities of the auxiliary though not uni-causative role played by the doctrine of *hongaku shiso* in the evolution of Japan's "Ethnocentric Turn" — or let us simply call it the chauvinism culminating in the *Kokutai no hongi* of 1937.

With its 400 pp. of text and 80 pp. of dense notes this is a book not to be summarized but to be highly recommended — and carefully read.

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V.Y. MUDIMBE, *Tales of Faith. Religion as Political Performance in Central Africa* — London and Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Athlone Press 1997 (xiv + 231 p.) ISBN 0-485-17418-9 (hb.) £25.95.

Mudimbe investigates African religious praxis and its nexus to their identity. The book, which comprises four chapters with a preface and epilogue, demonstrates "how representations of religious systems bind, fuse or oppose each other in synthetic discourses which, at a different level, might transmute into metadiscourses". It explores the histories of Christianity (and Is-

lam) and their levels of adaptability in a new sociocultural milieu (Central Africa). Religion is phenomenologically described as a political dramatization in theoretical and anthropological theatres. Mudimbe perceives religion as "a performance, namely, as an acting, an abstract or concrete practice of representing something that seems to go beyond human control". He supplements his discourse on "transcultural enterprises of conversion, adaptation and inculcation of Christianity" with Lévy-Bruhl's highly spatialized representations of effects from everyday life.

His critical analysis lucidly exposes the evolutionary paradigms under which many classical anthropological works (Evans-Pritchard and Lévy-Bruhl) were subsumed. He criticizes the claim which maintains a radical tension and polarity or that which creates a physical void between 'paganism', mythical thought and orality on the one hand, and Christianity, a science of the abstract and historicity on the other. There is no existing human society without history and historicity. Every culture, individual and language should be spoken of, analyzed, and understood from the rationality of their own norms, internal rules, and within the logic of their own systems. Noting as real the existing strains between colonialism and Christianity, he warns of the danger of underestimation or overestimation of this tension to the point of negating the 'isomorphic intention' of both colonialism and missionary Christianity. His concluding reflection is a personal meditation on the being of a specific métissage between religious forms of experiences. This book is a major resource in the reconstruction of African and intercultural history. Historians of religion will particularly find this book very useful in their understanding of the religious history and experience of Africans.

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AFE ADOGAME

HANS WALDENFELS, *Gottes Wort in der Fremde. Theologische Versuche*
II. Series: Begegnung, 5 — Bonn: Verlag Norbert M. Borengässer 1997
(525 p.) ISBN 3-923946-30-9 (cloth) DM 65.00.

After having submitted the first volume of his "theological approaches" titled "Begegnung der Religionen" in 1990, the theologian and philosopher

of religion, H. Waldenfels from Bonn, presented the follow-up in 1997, also within the framework of "contextual-dialogical studies on theology of cultures and religions" called "Gottes Wort in der Fremde". This second volume is primarily a collection of articles already published in various magazines and compilations. Out of 27 articles, eight have not yet been published.

The chapters of the book have been skilfully assigned to four subjects under the subtitles: "Sprachen als Brücken in die Fremde", p. 7-164; "Der uns fremde Buddhismus", p. 167-331; "Spirituelle Kreuzungen", p. 335-415; and "China — der Bewährungsfall", p. 419-508. These are also the main topics of this book.

The theological discussion of Buddhism — which is not confined to the chapter on Buddhism but constantly comes up in other contexts — can be regarded as the centre of the book. Waldenfels argues on a contextual-dialogical "Begegnungshermeneutik" which seeks to understand unfamiliar positions from their own point of view. In various contexts, Waldenfels defines his viewpoint as opposed to the "pluralistic theology of religions". He makes it perfectly clear that his approach to the question of the truth of religion is derived from a Christian standpoint. The "word of God" is not subjected to contextualization and qualification.

The theologian from Bonn is certainly aware of the problematic cultural dependence of the "images of God". Therefore, he raises important questions considering the scope of the "kulturbedingten Schalenbereichs" (p. 107) and the identity of Christianity. At the same time he pleads not to push the "contextualization" of the Christian text and the Christian truth too far.

"Die Beschäftigung mit den Kontexten und den kulturellen Umfeldern verdrängt nicht nur vielfach die Beschäftigung mit dem Text. Der Text selbst wird vielmehr inzwischen nicht selten derartig kontextualisiert bzw. in seine eigenen Kontexte hinein relativiert und aufgelöst, daß sein Gehalt als Botschaft von einer neuen, heilbringenden Realität unter- und verlorengeht" (p. 108).

Yet, religious studies with a hermeneutic approach — pronouncing itself in accordance with Waldenfels against the absorption of religion into culture and being faced with today's plurality of images of man and god — will generally have to consider the possibility of "God's Word" as an indisputable starting-point.

In my opinion, a fundamental difference exists between the hermeneutics of theology and of religious studies. Religious studies in the sense of "Religionswissenschaft" have to do without theological guidelines and have to look at different religions without prejudice although there is no such thing as complete objectivity. However, religious studies cannot refer to God's word — not least because of epistemological reasons.

Nevertheless, Waldenfels' theological approaches are highly interesting, even for religious studies concerned with intercultural questions. His striking analysis of the time are especially worth mentioning. One outstanding example is the "Zeitansage vor der Jahrhundertwende" (p. 7-21). Here, Waldenfels actually refers to a non-theologian, the author Ernst Jünger, to support the anti-anthropocentric thesis that man does not have the last word. Against the background of Jünger's prognosis, also the Christian may "quietly" speak of God again. This example proves that Waldenfels' approach is in keeping with the times, seeking a dialogue with different trends in different cultures and disciplines. In this respect, his open-mindedness is admirable and his new book seems to me a shining example of religious studies (also in the sense of "Religionswissenschaft") with its finger on the pulse of time.

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WACH, RELIGION, AND “THE EMANCIPATION OF ART”

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Summary

Despite the abundance of lore about Joachim Wach’s lifelong passion for literature, music, and other arts, the pertinence of his aesthetic reflections to his formation as historian of religions is often ignored or under-appreciated. Yet his involvement with the *Kreis* surrounding the poet Stefan George was perhaps one of the chief early factors that led Wach to liken the study of the history of religions to contemplation of literature and the arts. It is even possible that ideas of the literary historian Friedrich Gundolf about the relationship between the artist and the artist’s work helped stimulate Wach’s early thinking about the relationship between religious experience and the theoretical, practical, and institutional expressions of that experience. Indeed, throughout his own scholarly writings Wach displays an irrepressible tendency toward combining *religionswissenschaftlich* theorizing with aesthetic reflection, and toward encompassing literary, musical, and other artistic examples within the scope of data to be considered by scholars of religion.

This article analyzes the development of that tendency in Wach’s scholarship, paying special attention finally to his notion of the modern Western “emancipation of art” from religious influence. This notion, while reflecting a general optimism that characterizes his view of the diversifying, developmental course of numerous other religious and cultural phenomena over time, may ultimately be too strong or reductive for describing what has actually occurred over the past several centuries in the relation between artistic and religious phenomena.

Lover of Arts, Person of Paideia

In recounting the life and work of his late mentor, Joseph Kitagawa once alluded to Joachim Wach’s having “mentioned the thrilling experience of being taken, when he was eleven years old, to a great Mendelssohn celebration in Leipzig. He was seated next to his grandmother, a daughter of Felix Mendelssohn, in a place of honor, and listened to a performance of the oratorio, *Elijah*.” Having impressed upon Wach an awareness of his “noble heritage, . . . most notably that of the philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn, and the musician, Felix

Mendelssohn Bartholdy,”¹ this occasion illustrates Wach’s cultivated immersion from an early age in music, literature, and art. During his years as a student at the University of Leipzig majoring in the history of religions and minoring in philosophy of religion and “Oriental” studies, Wach counted among his friends young poets, dancers, and musicians, not to mention physicians and scientists.

Manfred Hausmann, the poet, read his first play in the home of Wach’s parents. Kurt Thomas, conductor of the St. Thomas Choir School in Leipzig, often played his compositions in Wach’s house. . . . Wach and his talented friends once played Hofmannsthal’s *Der Tor und der Tod* on the terrace of his parents’ Dresden home. On another occasion, when they read Goethe’s *Tasso*, Wach’s sister. . . recalls that she took the role of Leonore d’Este and Wach that of the Herzog of Ferrera. (Kitagawa, “Introduction,” *CSR*, xx)

After receiving his doctorate at Leipzig in 1922, Wach spent two years studying at the University of Heidelberg, where he attended lectures by the distinguished literary historian Friedrich Gundolf, by whom he was lastingly influenced.

¹ Joseph M. Kitagawa, Introduction to Joachim Wach, *Understanding and Believing: Essays by Joachim Wach* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), vii (hereafter *UB*). Except where otherwise noted, I have drawn my information on Wach’s life and career mainly from this Introduction, together with a number of other portraits by Kitagawa, including his *Gibt es ein Verstehen fremder Religionen? Mit einer Biographie Joachim Wachs und einer vollständigen Bibliographie seiner Werke*, Joachim-Wach Vorlesungen, I, der Theologischen Fakultät der Philipps-Universität Marburg/Lahn, ed. Ernst Benz (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 1-5; his “Introduction: Life and Thought of Joachim Wach,” in Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), xiii-xlviii (hereafter *CSR*); and his “Wach, Joachim,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 16 vols., ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 15:311-13; repr. as “Joachim Wach” in Kitagawa’s *The History of Religions: Understanding Human Experience* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 271-74 (hereafter *HRUHE*). I have also drawn information from Rainer Flasche, *Die Religionswissenschaft Joachim Wachs* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978); and the same author’s “Joachim Wach (1898-1955),” in *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mircea Eliade*, ed. Axel Michaels (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 290-302.

It was during those Heidelberg years that Wach came under the sway of the charismatic poet Stefan George (1868-1933), who, with his famous circle of disciples (including Gundolf, one of Wach's closest links to the group²), aspired to create a new world and culture of pure, beautiful art. The most significant aesthetic commitment of his life, Wach's adherence to the legacy of the *George-Kreis* is thought to have largely supplied him with the problem and mission of “understanding” (*Verstehen*) and to have stamped his whole personality — not only his thinking and, in the early years, his religiosity, but also his appearance, demeanor, even his unmarried state (which was consistent with the circle's principles).³

Wach's allegiance to the *George-Kreis* can be viewed as highly ironic given George's later reputation as a prophet of Nazism,⁴ as well as the now perceived kinship between the *Kreis*'s “aesthetic fundamentalism” and other currents in German culture that helped make possible the Third Reich.⁵ In fact, like Wach, Joseph Goebbels had studied George under Gundolf at Heidelberg in 1920, where the future Nazi propaganda minister received his doctorate the next year, a year before Wach arrived there. Gundolf, whose actual name was Gundelfinger and who happened to be Jewish, was repelled by the young Goebbels; although it was from Gundolf that Goebbels got the

² See Flasche, *Religionswissenschaft Joachim Wachs*, 19 n. 24; Flasche, “Joachim Wach,” 290.

³ See Flasche, *Religionswissenschaft Joachim Wachs*, 14. Cf. Kitagawa, Introduction to *UB*, x.

⁴ See, e.g., J. Gaudefroy-Domombynes, “Stefan George, annonciateur du nouveau Reich,” *Mercure de France* 144 (January 1934): 31-49; Peter Viereck, “Stefan George, Perilous Prophet,” *Antioch Review* 9 (1949): 111-16; Elisabeth Gundolf, “Stefan George und der Nationalsozialismus,” in her *Stefan George* (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini Presse, 1965), 52-76. Of course this reputation of George's became known to Wach, who cites the first of these articles in his own undated, posthumously published paper, “Stefan George (1863-1933): Poet and Priest of Modern Paganism,” in *UB*, 11-29; see 23 n. 22.

⁵ See Stefan Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus: Stefan George und der deutsche Antimodernismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).

subject for his dissertation, the offense he took at not being accepted into the eminent professor's inner circle left a lasting wound, and may have figured in the growth of his later anti-semitism.⁶ Nonetheless, Goebbels, himself a frustrated novelist, remained such an ecstatic fan of George that in 1933, as the newly-appointed Nazi propaganda minister, he implored him (unsuccessfully) to head the Third Reich's Dichter-Akademie.⁷

One can only wonder how this episode was viewed by Wach back in Leipzig, where he had taught since 1924. In April 1935, a year and a month before the local National Socialist authorities issued an order to destroy the statue of Wach's ancestor, "the hundred per cent Jew Mendelssohn-Bartholdie [sic]," which had stood since 1892 in front of the Leipzig Gewandhaus but which now allegedly "arouse[d] public indignation,"⁸ Wach's professorial appointment at Leipzig was terminated by the government of Saxony under Nazi pressure. Like that event, his subsequent career is well known: he fled to the United States, where he taught at Brown University from 1935 to 1945, and at the University of Chicago Divinity School from 1945 to his death ten years later.

In Kitagawa's view, Wach's war-time separation from his mother, sister, and brother, all of whom suffered terribly under Nazi persecution, "did something to him, psychically," putting an end to his "intellectual creativity."⁹ Yet his love of the arts never diminished. During

⁶ See, e.g., Helmut Heiber, *Goebbels*, tr. John K. Dickinson (New York: Hawthorn, 1972), 20, 28, originally published as *Joseph Goebbels* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag Otto H. Hess, 1962); Helmut Heiber, Introduction to his edition of *The Early Goebbels Diaries: 1925-1926*, tr. Oliver Watson (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 20. On Goebbels' relationship to Gundolf see also Viereck, "Stefan George, Perilous Prophet," 112; Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *Dr. Goebbels* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 16, 298.

⁷ See Viereck, "Stefan George, Perilous Prophet," 116.

⁸ Quoted by Wilfrid Blunt, *On Wings of Song: A Biography of Felix Mendelssohn* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 274.

⁹ Joseph Kitagawa, letter of 21 August 1990 to Eric Ziolkowski. In his published comments regarding these war-time strains on Wach, Kitagawa never broaches the

his tenure at Chicago, he was known to work habitually with recordings of Mendelssohn's compositions playing; not adept at the use of modern technologies, he would often invite one of his graduate students to come to his apartment in the early evening to stack the records on his changer and start the stereo system, and then to return late in the evening to turn the stereo off. But of course Wach preferred live performances, and in this regard displayed a healthy sense of priorities. He reportedly once excused himself from a faculty meeting, explaining that he was headed downtown to Orchestra Hall to attend a concert that evening of some Mendelssohn music. It was also said to be Wach's custom with a particular colleague who was equally steeped in German literature that whenever they happened to meet on campus, one of them would extemporaneously choose from memory a passage from Goethe, Schiller, or some other classic German poet and quote it aloud to test whether the colleague could on the spot recite the rest of the passage, likewise from memory.¹⁰

Despite the abundant lore about Wach's lifelong, active interest in the aesthetic realm, the pertinence of his reflections upon literature and the arts to his formation as historian of religions is an aspect of his scholarly legacy that is often ignored or under-appreciated. Surely to Wach would apply what Kitagawa said of Mircea Eliade and the theologian Paul Tillich, namely, that he had a “passion not only for knowledge (learning) but also for culture (*paideia*) in the Greek sense of the term.”¹¹ And if the phenomenologist of religion Gerardus van der Leeuw, as Eliade observed, anticipated the tendency among mid-

question of how they might have affected Wach's “intellectual creativity.” See, e.g., Kitagawa, *Gibt es...?*, 4; “Introduction,” in CSR, xxi; “Joachim Wach,” *HRUHE*, 272.

¹⁰ The anecdote about the records was related to me by Stan Lusby, who studied with Wach from 1949 to Wach's death. The other anecdotes were related to me by Kitagawa in conversation in the 1980s, and Professor Lusby has confirmed for me that they were part of the Wach “lore” which he himself heard as a student. If my memory serves me correctly, the colleague with whom Wach reportedly “competed” in quoting German verse was actually the University's president of the time, Robert Hutchins.

¹¹ Joseph M. Kitagawa, “Eliade and Tillich,” in *HRUHE*, 330.

twentieth-century Western thinkers to break down walls between academic disciplines,¹² Wach personified that tendency no less strikingly, despite his unflagging insistence on the autonomy of *Religionswissenschaft* among the humanistic sciences. At Chicago, with his “encyclopedic” erudition and inquisitive spirit, he was esteemed by some as a “natural bridge between the theological faculty and the humanistic and social-scientific disciplines.”¹³ As with van der Leeuw, the accomplished poet and musician, and Eliade, the renowned novelist and short-story writer, Wach’s passion for *paideia* meant that his central devotion to studying and interpreting a universal range of religious phenomena was complemented by, and inextricable from, a rich variety of aesthetic concerns.¹⁴

How did those concerns bear upon Wach’s developing conception and practice of *Religionswissenschaft*? I shall devote the remainder of this essay to answering that question.

Arts, Aesthetics, and Religionswissenschaft

Presumably the influence of the *George-Kreis*, especially through Gundolf, was one of the chief factors that led Wach from the outset of his career to conceive of the investigation of religions as being akin to contemplation of literature and the arts. As noted by Kitagawa, Wach never changed his conception of the basic structure of *Religionswissenschaft*: “its twin tasks (historical and theoretical); the centrality of religious experience and its three-fold expressions (theoretical, practical, and sociological); and the crucial importance of hermeneu-

¹² Mircea Eliade, Preface to Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*, tr. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), vi.

¹³ Kitagawa, *Gibt es...?*, 4. Cf. Joseph M. Kitagawa, “In Memoriam: Joachim Wach — Teacher and Colleague,” in *UB*, 198.

¹⁴ For elaboration on the points made in this paragraph, together with suggestions as to how certain currents of thought expressed in the development of *Religionswissenschaft* might inform the study of religion and literature, see Eric J. Ziolkowski, “Religion and Literature and the History of Religions: Grounds for Alliance,” in *Literature and Theology* 12:3 (1998): 305-325.

tics."¹⁵ If the *George-Kreis* instilled in Wach the preoccupation with hermeneutics,¹⁶ it is possible that Gundolf's ideas about the relationship between the artist and the artist's work stimulated Wach's thinking about the relationship between religious experience and religious expressions. Wach was to opine that the great experiences out of which all religious traditions originate "exist for others only in the degree to which they are expressed and where there is genuine religion, it will necessarily be expressed" (CSR, 59). Although he attributes this idea to the historian of religions C.P. Tiele (CSR, 169 n. 4), it also calls to mind Gundolf's claim in his classic biography of Goethe that while the artist's experience (*Erlebnis*) might be superficially distinguished from the artist's work, "The artist exists only insofar as he expresses himself [*sich ausdrückt*] through the work of art."¹⁷

Wach's tendency to associate the study of religion with the study of the arts first emerges in the chapter on method in his 1924 treatise *Religionswissenschaft*. There, in dismissing the common notion of understanding as sympathy (*Nachfühlen*) or empathy (*Nacherleben*) and characterizing it rather as "an entirely spontaneous, productive act," he contends that to interpret a religion or a work of art does not require consideration of its originator's "psychological condition."¹⁸ Having followed Dilthey in likening the interpretation of a religion to that of an art work, Wach also associates the study of religion with that of music by dismissing the assumption that human beings who profess no particular religious faith or confession are "religiously unmusical." As opposed to Max Weber, whom Wach does not mention here but who spoke of the "religiously unmusical" as the antithesis of the religious "virtuoso" (another term adapted from musicology),¹⁹ Wach

¹⁵ Kitagawa, "Joachim Wach," in *HRUHE*, 273-74.

¹⁶ As suggested by Flasche, *Die Religionswissenschaft Joachim Wachs*, 14.

¹⁷ Friedrich Gundolf, *Goethe* (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1922), 2, translation mine.

¹⁸ Joachim Wach, *Introduction to the History of Religions*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Gregory D. Alles, with Karl W. Luckert (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 111 (hereafter *IHR*).

¹⁹ See, e.g., Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, tr. and ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New

displays his allegiance to the theory of Rudolf Otto by contending that “humanity, by nature, is attuned to religion,” and therefore:

The study of music knows that there is no such thing as an unmusical person; such a person often lacks only the training and development of an ear for music. It would be good, too, if historians of religions would realize that a poorly developed religious sense never means that such a sense is lacking altogether. (*IHR*, 115)

Not only art and music, but, most extensively, poetry is invoked by Wach to illustrate his theory of understanding. To counter a common misinterpretation of what Dilthey taught regarding the relation between experience (*Erlebnis*) and understanding (see *IHR*, 112, 218 n. 32), he contends that the possibilities of human experience are not limited to the totality of a person’s external experience (*äussere Lebenserfahrung*): one need not have been in love, waged battle, or grown old to understand a lover, a general, or the aged. The fact that external experiences (*Erfahrungen*) can be anticipated by internal experience (*inneres Erleben*) is known by poets, who “provide us with the practical proof of this ability, and every now and again they reflect upon it theoretically” (112). This is not to deny the bearing of external experience upon poetry. In probing the theoretical ramifications of this problem of imagination (*Phantasie*), experience (*Erlebnis*), and poetry Wach is well aware of Dilthey’s observation that poetic creation invariably originates out of “life-experience [*Lebenserfahrung*], either personal experience [*Erlebnis*] or the understanding of other human beings, present as well as past, and the events in which they took part.” But just as Dilthey went on to qualify that “Only those moments of [the poet’s] existence [*Dasein*] that disclose to him one of life’s characteristics possess a deeper relationship to his poetry,”²⁰ so Wach stresses that

York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946; repr. 1978), 287; cf. 289. The two terms appear intermittently in other places in this essay, as well as elsewhere in Weber’s writings on the sociology and economics of religion.

²⁰ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1905; 4th ed., Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1913), 198; cited in *IHR*, 112, and quoted on 218 n. 33-219.

what ultimately matters is what the poet makes of external experiences through inner, imaginative power:

It is by imagination that experiences first bear fruit. To an amazing degree, imagination may supplement experiences and even substitute for them. Dilthey... describes the work of the (poetic) imagination as "creativity born from the fullness of internal powers, independent of ordinary life and its goals, and necessarily following its own laws." A more recent poet, Thomas Mann,... has revealed to us what must be regarded as the ultimate motivating power of the poetic imagination: longing or yearning (*Sehnsucht*). (*IHR*, 113)

These reflections upon poetry are germane in two respects to Wach's conception of his scholarly enterprise. First, the distinction he draws à la Dilthey between "life-experience" and what the poet imaginatively makes of "life-experience" harks back to Aristotle's distinction between history as that which conveys *particular* truths (telling what happened), and poetry as that which conveys *universal* truths (telling what might happen). Much as Aristotle therefore viewed poetry as "something more scientific and serious" (*καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον*) than history,²¹ so is *Religionswissenschaft* deemed by Wach to be more hermeneutically sophisticated than the positivist, historicist approach to religion. Whereas the historicist obsesses over "completeness of data," and whereas someone taking the opposite, ahistorical approach arbitrarily selects data "based upon a traditional or freely chosen viewpoint,"²² Wach will urge that the study of religions aim "to determine by comparison and phenomenological analysis if anything like a structure can be discovered in all these forms of expression, to what kind of experience this variegated expression can be traced, and finally, what kind of reality or realities may correspond to the experiences in question."²³ Like Aristotle's poet, and unlike the historian or historicist in both Aristotle's time and Wach's

²¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b, in *Aristotle*, 29 vols., The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 23 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927; rev. 1932), 34-35.

²² Joachim Wach, Introduction to *Types of Religious Experience Christian and Non-Christian* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951), xiv (hereafter *TRE*).

²³ Joachim Wach, "Universals in Religion" (undated), in *TRE*, 30.

own, the Wachian investigator of religions will be satisfied not with the arbitrary collection of factual data but only with the more “scientific” discernment of what Wach calls the “universals” in religion.

While he never acknowledges these correlations between his theory of *Religionswissenschaft* and Aristotle’s notion of poetry, Wach does indicate a way his own reflections upon poetry inform his conception of his scholarly vocation. Pondering Mann’s idea of the poet’s “yearning,” he finds that notion to signify “the soul’s inner ability and readiness to transcend itself,” a task the soul accomplishes “with the help of the imagination. For imagination allows ideas to be grasped, feelings to be felt, and realms of the soul to be traversed that actual experience (*Erfahrung*) could never teach the poet” (*IHR*, 113). In this regard the similarity between the poet and the scholar becomes evident, as the latter’s “interest is stimulated by the appearance of a great personality, of significant processes, or of a tragic event” (113). Given the same “inner affinity” as the one between the poet and the poet’s object, “the person who wishes to understand enters into a mysterious communication with the object of study that allows him to penetrate to its core. One side of his being (*Wesen*) is touched.” With an increasingly aroused imagination, the person thus feels drawn to seek a broader, deeper, more precise understanding of the object of interest, and “yearns to develop further those dispositions of the soul that have not yet been realized. Thus, the limits of empirical personality are expanded” (113).

At this point it might seem that Wach’s reflection upon the history of religions was informed by poets and poetry only in the abstract, that is, that he was concerned not with specific works by actual literary artists but with “the poet,” “poets,” and “poetry” purely as theoretical constructs. However, this perception would be inaccurate. Wach often does appeal to those categories abstractly. But in some cases a particular work, or a corpus of works by a specific poet or other literary artist, proves revelatory to him in his capacity as historian of religions.

Several brief examples will illustrate this point. In his “religio-sociological” essay *Meister und Jünger*, which appeared a year after

Religionswissenschaft, it is to Hölderlin's poetic depiction of the relationship between Empedocles and Pausanias that Wach repeatedly alludes as one of the most poignant expressions of the master-disciple bond.²⁴ Nine years later, in his 1934 essay on Romano Guardini's monographic study of "religious existence" in the novels of Dostoevsky, Wach praises the German Catholic theologian for having revealed in those works "the groundlines of a Christian anthropology in contrast to any and all 'secular' understandings of the human being."²⁵ Guardini's orientation reminds Wach of the systems of *Weltanschauungen* and types set forth by Dilthey, Jaspers, and Spranger.²⁶ No doubt because his own comparative method involves the delineation of "types" of religious phenomena and "forms" of religious expression, he is pleased to find Guardini analyzing Dostoevsky's characters as representative of different forms of spiritual life, and arranging them into "a typology of human personality structures and modes of behavior" (200).

However, more so than Hölderlin, Dostoevsky, or any other literary artist, it was Stefan George who seems to have embodied for Wach the most perfect amalgam of aesthetic and religious concerns. In *Meister und Jünger*, notwithstanding the essay's primary appeals to the paradigms of Jesus, the Buddha, and the relation of those two figures to their followers, one can hardly overlook the *George-Kreis* relation as a prototype that constantly, if only implicitly, informs Wach's analysis. This is clearest in what he says about the "circle" the master forms

²⁴ See Joachim Wach, "Master and Disciple: Two Religio-Sociological Studies," in his *Essays in the History of Religions*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Gregory D. Alles (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 15-16, 19, 22 (hereafter *EHR*).

²⁵ Joachim Wach, "Religiöse Existenz: Zu dem Dostojewskij-Buch Romano Guardinis," *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft*, 40th issue, 7th installment (1934): 193-201; quote on 193. Guardini's study, which originally appeared under the title *Der Mensch und der Glaube: Versuche über die religiöse Existenz in Dostojewskis grossen Romanen* (Leipzig: J. Hegner, 1932), was also republished as *Religiöse Gestalten in Dostojewskis Werk* (Munich: Hegner Library, Josef Kösel, 1947).

²⁶ See Wach, "Religiöse Existenz," 196.

around himself, as opposed to the “school” headed by the teacher (see “Master,” in *EHR*, 3). Although George is never mentioned in *Meister und Jünger*, the essay is practically framed between a pair of important extra-textual allusions to him. One is the quotation from George’s volume of poems *Der Stern des Bundes* (1914) which heads the essay: “Since man’s nature is sustained only where the darksome offering is retained” (“Da menschenwesen sich nur dort erhält / Wo sich das dunkle opfer wiederholt” [*EHR*, 1]).²⁷ As Wach rephrases this same point near the essay’s end, the master’s figure “lives in the heart of the disciples” (29). Each disciple thus grows through the “dynamic” of a direct, reciprocal I-thou relation with the master, and through the ongoing opportunity of focusing his or her own experience through the master’s “image.” But what happens when the master dies?

A closing observation in the essay is that the image of the deceased master will continue to evolve through the disciples’ “productive fantasy,” with the consequence that the image gradually becomes a “myth.” On this point, in the penultimate endnote (not included with the essay’s translation in *EHR*), Wach makes his second allusion to George: “The George circle taught us once again to direct our view at the history of the image of a great human figure or a work and to understand and interpret it from within itself.... This way of viewing things has manifested its fruitfulness in literary, art, and political history,” as exemplified in George’s own publication series *Blätter für die Kunst*, in Gundolf’s study *Dichter und Helden* (1921), and in Ernst Bertram’s introduction to his own *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (1918). The same point, Wach adds, “can also be of greatest significance to the history of religion,” as exemplified in the fourth chapter of his own *Religionswissenschaft*.²⁸

In an undated paper he wrote on George sometime after the poet’s death, George’s ongoing prominence for Wach as an embodied amal-

²⁷ Quoted by Joachim Wach, *Meister und Jünger: Zwei religionssoziologische Betrachtungen* (Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, [n.d.]), 5. I have slightly emended the English rendering of this quotation offered in *EHR*.

²⁸ Wach, *Meister und Jünger*, 74 n. 52-75, translation mine.

gam of religious and aesthetic concerns is reflected in the focus upon him as a “poet and priest of modern paganism,” a poet with a “hymnal mind” and a “religious nature,” whose life and work address modern Christians as “a powerful religious paganism.”²⁹ Among the elements of this paper that link it to *Meister und Jünger* are the opening association of George with Empedocles, and the descriptions of George as a man “not easily approached” or “a prophet... not easily understood” (11), who pursued “self-imposed isolation” (13). All these elements correlate with the earlier essay’s portrayal of the master as an Empedoclean type who inevitably remains incomprehensible even to his disciples, and who realizes that his essential loneliness cannot be shared by anyone, even his disciples. Moreover, in direct pertinence to Wach’s discussion elsewhere of ritual or action as the second of the three forms through which religious experience finds expression, he here says of the following passage from *Der Stern des Bundes* that “the relationship between experience and worship has seldom been so precisely expressed” (26):

Wer schauen durfte bis hinab zum grund
Trägt ein gefeiter heim zu aller wohl
Den zauber als Begehung und als Bild.
(Who was allowed to see the depths becomes / Immune, and for the common
good transmits / The spell as rite and image.)
(quoted and translated in *UB*, 26)

Wach’s readiness to invoke poets to illustrate religious phenomena was undoubtedly related to his awareness that it is in the spheres of literature and pictorial art, as well as those of religion and law, that hermeneutics has its most deep-seated roots. As he notes in his introduction to *Das Verstehen*, the first of whose three volumes appeared in 1926, the literary, religious, and legal spheres all involve a concern with texts or assemblages of texts passed down from earlier times. In all three spheres, the ancient world, the “Orient,” and the

²⁹ Wach, “Stefan George” (n. 4 above), 11, 13. For further discussion of this paper and its relationship to *Meister und Jünger*, see Flasche, *Die Religionswissenschaft Joachim Wachs*, 76-79.

modern world have developed whole collections of interpretive rules which, through discerning and thoughtful application, are aimed at bringing about and securing an understanding of the considered text.³⁰ Space will not allow us to identify in this almost thousand-page survey of nineteenth-century hermeneutics the many instances where the author alludes to developments in aesthetics and literary theory. Suffice it here to make one suggestive point.

In both its text and its copious footnotes, *Das Verstehen* yields a number of intermittent allusions to the philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-62), who was significant for providing an initial impetus to the modern philosophical study of the arts; for naming this new science “aesthetics”; and for demarcating the boundaries of this science in such a way as to insure its independence from other disciplines.³¹ Wach exalts Baumgarten as “extraordinarily learned and stimulating,” and finds that his work “breathes the spirit of the Enlightenment” (V, 1:17 n. 2). In one dense footnote Wach mentions him while summing up the philosophical background of Schleiermacher’s then-typical idea of aesthetics as denoting mainly the discussion of factors that combine to give artistic pleasure. In alluding to some two dozen relevant thinkers, Wach identifies Leibniz, Sulzer, Moritz, and Baumgarten as the four who endowed German aesthetics with its tendency to search for connections between the work of art and the artistic subject (1:149 n. 1).

Given Baumgarten’s role in the establishment of aesthetics as an autonomous field of philosophical reflection, his treatment in *Das Verstehen* furnishes a conceptual bond between that work and Wach’s *Sociology of Religion* (1944). In the latter study, Wach acknowledges from the outset the import of “the study of ‘religion and art’”: “Just

³⁰ See Joachim Wach, *Das Verstehen: Grundzüge einer Geschichte der hermeneutischen Theorie im 19. Jahrhundert*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1926-33; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966), 1:5-6 (hereafter V).

³¹ For discussion and references see Eric J. Ziolkowski, “Kierkegaard’s Concept of the Aesthetic: A Semantic Leap from Baumgarten,” *Literature and Theology* 6:1 (1992): 33-46.

as the careful study of the history of art gave us a new understanding and appreciation of the nature of that art which is different from our own, so the historian of religion today tries to penetrate the mythical symbolism used in religion and to reveal for us the real meaning which lies swathed in such exotic clothing.”³² To be sure, adopting Hegel’s distinction between objective and absolute mind, he consigns works of art, together with technical achievements, economic systems, laws, and systems of thought, to the category of “objective systems of culture,” which concern the sociologist “only indirectly,” as opposed to societal “organizations” (15). Yet he also perceives “the growth of artistic sense” as one among other factors and interests which, over time, influence the development and degeneration of religiously significant “natural groupings” (106-7).

This perception helps explain why Wach’s *Sociology* yields a kind of *summa* of Wach’s insights into various relationships between the *aesthetic* and the religious. He will conclude that all “genuine” religious expressions “are meant not to serve external, that is, social, political, economic, *aesthetic*, or personal aims and purposes but to formulate and perpetuate man’s deepest experience, his communion with God” (376, emphasis mine). Yet the book is replete with allusions to prevalent symptoms of religious-aesthetic interplay, such as the “aesthetic finish” of Trobriand magic, commented upon by Malinowski (225); the creating and fostering of “the arts of sacred song, writing, literature, music, dance, sacred painting, sculpture, and architecture” by the priest as a type (365); and the religious associations of dance — as exemplified in the ecstatic rituals of African, Asiatic, and Indian secret societies (117); in Aboriginal totemic practices (197); in the rituals associated with a certain type of prophet (349); and in the fertility rituals of the Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea and various other sacred rituals of peoples around the world (e.g., 74, 100-101, 114, 223).

Among all the references to the arts in *Sociology of Religion*, the most provocative occur in the heavily-footnoted paragraph which

³² Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1944; 1st Phoenix ed., 1962), 3, 7 (hereafter *SR*).

closes his prefatory discussion of “the integrating power of worship” (39-44). There, reiterating a thesis already well established by others, Wach declares that “the arts were fostered and cultivated under the aegis of religious inspiration” (43). With regard to “the interrelation of religion and art” (43 n. 45) he cites Robert Lowie’s 1924 study of *Primitive Religion* and Raffael Karsten’s lesser-known 1926 investigation of magical and religious practices of South American Indians.³³ The choice of Lowie is interesting. In countering Jane Harrison’s theory that ancient Greek drama and art originated out of “primitive” ritual,³⁴ Lowie’s assertion that aesthetic and religious impulses are essentially independent but constantly interact seems also to challenge the opinions of Durkheim, who considered religion and cult in their “elementary forms” to be inherently aesthetic in nature; of Weber, who found religion since its beginnings to have been “an inexhaustible fountain of opportunities for artistic creation”; and of Otto and van der Leeuw, both of whom viewed literature and the fine arts phenomenologically as sublime, diversified expressions of the numinous or the sacred.³⁵

³³ See R.H. Lowie, *Primitive Religion* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924); Raffael Karsten, *The Civilization of the South American Indians, with Special Reference to Magic and Religion* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner; New York: A.A. Knopf, 1926); both cited in SR, 43 n. 45.

³⁴ See Jane Ellen Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1913).

³⁵ See Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, tr. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 126 n. 150, 375-77, 385-87; Max Weber, “Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions,” in *From Max Weber*, esp. 340-43; quote on 341 (cf. Max Weber, “The Tensions Between Ethical Religion and Art,” in his *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols., ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich [New York: Bedminster Press, 1968; repr. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978], 1:607-610); Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the nonrational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational*, tr. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1923; 2d ed. 1950), 65-71; Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*, tr. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), passim.

Although Wach cites none of those other authors on this point, his position seems closer to theirs than to Lowie's.³⁶ Acknowledging that there is "an irreducible pleasure in beauty and play," he footnotes a plethora of sources to support his claim that epic, dramatic, and lyric literature, as well as painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and dancing, all had a "cultic origin and significance" (43); and that "So long as artistic creativity served its original purpose, its integrating influence on religious groups was immeasurable" (44). As for the notion of *l'art pour l'art*, he calls this "a relatively late achievement" (43). "In the Western world," he declares, "the emancipation of art from its original setting began only with the Renaissance" (44). Although his only acknowledged authority on this development is Horace Kallen, whose study *Art and Freedom* had appeared two years earlier,³⁷ a more important influence reflected though unacknowledged here may be Weber's discussion of the "tensions" which develop between religion and art under increased "pressures of theoretical and practical rationalism."³⁸

Here, it is worth noting that the very concept of the emancipation of art from religion is akin to a notion which had gained prominence during the nineteenth century largely under the influence of Romanticism, namely, that it is only natural for specific new forms of art, literature, and music to come into being out of their creators' reaction against and

³⁶ This is not to deny that Otto, like Lowie, recognized the distinction between the religious and the aesthetic. Six years before he published *Das Heilige* (1917), known in English as *The Idea of the Holy* (n. 35 above), he had written: "There are probably a thousand different ways in which the aesthetic experience of nature modulates into religious experience, for it is related to religious experience in its very depths. But aesthetics is not religion, and the origins of religion lie somewhere completely different" (letter of 1911 to Martin Rade [for the magazine *Die christliche Welt*], in Rudolf Otto, *Autobiographical and Social Essays*, tr. and ed. Gregory D. Alles [Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996], 73).

³⁷ See Horace M. Kallen, *Art and Freedom: A Historical and Biographical Interpretation of the Relations between the Ideas of Beauty, Use and Freedom* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1942); cited in SR, 43 n. 46.

³⁸ Weber, "Religious Rejections," 342; cf. his *Economy and Society*, 1:608-609.

liberation from earlier forms. As Lesley Chamberlain observes regarding Nietzsche's famous break from Wagner,

perhaps Wagner's dominance too would have to have been invented had it not existed, for all the arts were freeing themselves in pursuit of a new expressiveness. Nietzsche, whose Dionysian goals and poor health made him dream of Mexico and Spain, made much of the contrasting visual correlatives of Wagner and Bizet. [Bizet's opera] *Carmen* brought on African skies, whereas Wotan was the god of bad weather, the deity of those rain-sodden clouds or swirling mists which hung over Bayreuth on Nietzsche's few unhappy visits. He made it sound amusingly personal, but we can see with hindsight Nietzsche was not alone in his time. . . . We need look only at the history of painting. The same spring of 1888, when Nietzsche moved to Turin, Van Gogh arrived in Provence, having come south in search of the colour and light which would transform European art. Gauguin joined him a month later to live in the same aesthetic ambience as Nietzsche had enjoyed in Nice.³⁹

As a legacy in part of this general tendency of the arts' "freeing themselves" from their own earlier forms, Wach's concept of art's "emancipation" from religion gives pause for some concluding thoughts regarding the germaneness of his aesthetic reflections to his thinking as a historian of religions.

The Emancipation Factor

The idea of emancipation recurs in various connections throughout Wach's writings. For example, the opening chapter of *Religionswissenschaft* is entitled "The Emancipation of the History of Religions," referring to what he considered to be the discipline's freedom from "domination of the other humanistic studies" (*IHR*, 7-18). His essay "The Idea of Man in the Near Eastern Religions" (1951), a revised version of a longer 1926 publication,⁴⁰ identifies "the emancipation of the *logos* from the *mythos*" as the distinguishing development of ancient Greece (*TRE*, 70). And his undated paper "Universals in Re-

³⁹ Lesley Chamberlain, *Nietzsche in Turin: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Piccador, 1998), 78.

⁴⁰ Joachim Wach, *Typen der religiösen Anthropologie* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1926).

ligion” describes the “secularization” of human activities as a process that occurs as “[man] emancipates himself from the power that sustains him” (*TRE*, 43), a description echoed in *Sociology of Religion* not only in the passage already cited but where Wach discusses the sacred performances that constitute the central ceremonial feature of many religions: “Even in its emancipated and ‘secularized’ form, the ‘drama’ exerts a magically integrating influence upon its audience” (*SR*, 372).

Such recurrent usage of the word “emancipation” brings us back to Kitagawa’s point, cited at the opening of our essay, about Wach’s consciousness of his eminent ancestry. Here I do not have in mind Wach’s love of the music of Felix Mendelssohn, the performance of whose *Elijah* he so fondly recalled having attended as a boy. (Incidentally, unlike most of Mendelssohn’s prodigious oeuvre, which tends to reflect the transition from the Classical tradition to the Romantic, that late oratorio on texts from the Hebrew Bible is evocative of a time before Western music was “emancipated” from religion.) Rather I am thinking of Wach’s understandable pride in his descent from Moses Mendelssohn, that pivotal exponent of the *Aufklärung*. It would be hard to imagine that the very term *Emanzipation*, with which Moses Mendelssohn’s legacy is so crucially bound up, did not bear a special resonance for Wach.

It may be fair to conclude that Wach’s repeated evocations of emancipation reveal a distinguishing characteristic of his thinking and temperament: what might be called his irrepressibly expansive, diversifying orientation — that is, his virtual compulsion to seek ever more data to embrace under his scholarly scope, albeit not arbitrarily, but for the purpose of arranging, separating, and systematizing them in accordance with his categories of “universals” and the “classical.”⁴¹ (In carrying on the Wachian tradition long after Wach’s death, Kitagawa would rehearse almost as a mantra to his own students the gentle imperative to “think typologically.”) In his celebrated, boundless erudition, Wach seems even to have projected a reflection of this *wis-*

⁴¹ See Wach, “Universals,” *passim*; and his “The Concept of the ‘Classical,’ ” in *TRE*, 48-57.

senschaftlich tendency of his onto the data themselves, finding the history of cultural and religious phenomena to develop constantly toward expansion and diversification, with a moment or period of “emancipation” being implied by each splitting-up of one phenomenon into two or more new ones, or with each branching-off of one new phenomenon from another, older one.

“Emancipation” always bears exclusively positive associations. Therefore the fact that Wach regards cultural, religious, and even scholarly developments as an ongoing series of diversifying, progressive emancipations — e.g., of *logos* from *mythos*, of art from religion, of drama from ritual, of the history of religions from other disciplines — bespeaks in him an attitude of pervasive optimism that links him no less directly to the enlightened expectancies of Moses Mendelssohn concerning the issue of religious tolerance than to the notorious prophetic dreams of Stefan George regarding the advent of a *neues Reich*. What is to be concluded from this? To the extent that this outlook was encouraged in Wach by his lifelong reflection upon music, literature, and the arts, and upon what he saw as their gradual emancipation from their religious origins, his aesthetic concerns might be said to have played a significant role in the formation of his thinking as a historian of religions.

Yet this conclusion opens a whole other large question, which our space here will hardly allow us to explore. Might not the term emancipation be too strong or reductive for describing what has occurred over the past several centuries in the relation between artistic and religious phenomena? As reflected in several of our quotations above, Wach’s notion of emancipation is closely tied to the concept of secularization, a term which, as the sociologist Peter Berger observed in the mid-1960s, had by then had such an “adventurous history” and attracted such intense “ideological furor” that some thought the term “should be abandoned as confusing if not downright meaningless.”⁴² Berger, to be sure, defended the term’s usefulness, elaborating upon

⁴² See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967; Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1969), 105-71; quote on 106.

the essentially Weberian sense of "secularization" as "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols."⁴³ Nonetheless, the adequacy of Wach's idea of art's "emancipation" from religion would appear vulnerable to questioning if for no other reason than that he conceived of the idea in connection with this other, broader concept about whose usage and legitimacy there have been such strong disagreements.

Even more to the point is the anthropologist Milton Singer's suggestion in the early 1970s that what is commonly referred to as a process of "secularization," "Westernization," and "rationalization" might, at least in the context of contemporary Indian civilization, be more aptly described as "deritualization" or "ritual neutralization." Whereas secularization is assumed to result eventually in "the complete elimination of ritual, religion, and ethics from the sphere of industry," the term deritualization implies "only an enlargement of the 'ritually neutral' area" within the work sphere.⁴⁴

Considerable portions of Singer's analysis of the adaptive strategies of Sanskritic Hindu culture toward economic, political, and other forces of modernity focus upon changes in the various arts and in folk, ritual, popular, devotional, classical, and modern urban cultural performances. Significantly, despite his having detected in a city like Madras "a shift in values from those predominantly connected with religious merit to those of mass entertainment and aesthetics," Singer maintains:

It would be inaccurate, however, to apply the Western concepts of secular urban mass culture and of "art for art's sake" in interpreting these changes. There are, indeed, secularizing tendencies, but they have not yet cut off urban culture from the traditional matrix of sacred culture. There is no sharp dividing line between religion and culture, and the traditional cultural media not only continue to survive in the city but have also been incorporated in novel ways into an emerging popular and classical culture. Much of the urban popular culture is an extension of the path of devotion (*bhaktimārga*), more easily accessible to

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁴ Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), 329.

modern man than the paths of strict ritual observance (*karmamārga*) or the path of sacred knowledge (*jñānamārga*). The classical arts, as well, offer a special path or discipline for those able to cultivate it that is akin to yogic concentration. (187)

Obviously Singer's qualifications about applying the concept of secularization in a discussion of the changing arts in modern India cannot simply be transferred, unmodified, to a reconsideration of Wach's idea of "the emancipation of art" in the West. Yet we can hardly avoid sensing that the Western case has been far more complex than Wach's phrase suggests, and indeed, that "deritualization" might be a safer or apter term than "secularization" or "emancipation" for describing certain transformations that have occurred over the past several centuries in Western arts. Let us take for example the observation of a contemporary anthropologist that a distinctive assumption in modern Western civilization is "that the discourse called literature can fill the role previously performed by religious textuality,"⁴⁵ or the expressed belief of one of the foremost American writers of fiction today "that the literary artist, to achieve full effectiveness, must assume a religious state of mind."⁴⁶ From such views as these, need it necessarily be assumed that literature is merely substituting for, and not also in some cases partaking in or somehow serving as a creative expression of an experience or dimension of life that might be considered religious?

A most radical counterargument to the idea of art's "emancipation" might emerge from what George Steiner contends in *Real Presences* (1989) after he notes "the plain fact that, most certainly in the West, the writings, works of art, musical compositions which are of central reference, comport that which is 'grave and constant' (Joyce's epithets)

⁴⁵ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993), 287.

⁴⁶ John Updike, "Religion and Literature," in *The Religion Factor: An Introduction to How Religion Matters*, ed. William Scott Green and Jacob Neusner (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 239. In quoting this statement by Updike in conjunction with the observation made by Asad, I do not mean to suggest that Updike would necessarily agree that literature can replace religion.

in the mystery of our condition.”⁴⁷ Steiner, who does not have Wach in mind, continues:

I am arguing that the ‘gravity’ and the ‘constancy’ are, finally, religious. As is the category of meaningfulness. They are religious in two main senses. The first is obvious. The *Oresteia*, *King Lear*, Dostoevsky’s *The Devils* no less than the art of Giotto or the Passions of Bach, inquire into, dramatize, the relations of man and woman to the existence of the gods or of God. It is the Hebraic intuition that God is capable of all speech-acts except that of monologue which has generated our arts of reply, of questioning and counter-creation. After the Book of Job and Euripides’ *Bacchae*, there *had* to be, if man was to bear his being, the means of dialogue with God which are spelt out in our poetics, music, art. (225).

Ultimately, then, the question of art’s “emancipation” in the modern West would be moot for Steiner. From his argument it would follow that no art worthy of the adjectives “grave and constant” could ever be “emancipated” from canopy of religion because such art already *is*, by its very nature, religious. Interestingly, this logic brings us in a full circle back to Wach’s conviction (shared by Clement C.J. Webb, Rudolf Otto, J. Mouroux, and others) that religious experience must be by definition “a *total* response of the *total* being to Ultimate Reality” (*CSR*, 32, emphasis mine). A person’s “total being” would obviously subsume whatever aesthetic sensibilities he or she might possess.

We are certainly entitled to balk before accepting fully these positions of Steiner and Wach. Indeed, if combined, their positions would threaten to preclude the drawing of any practical distinctions between religious and artistic phenomena. Yet, considered alone, the notion of “emancipation” itself fortuitously suggests a potent, final reason for rejecting the idea of “the emancipation of art.” For if Steiner is right to suggest that music, of all the arts, is definitively transcendent because it “is plainly uncircumscribed by the world,”⁴⁸ then there may be no category of human experience or aspiration that has been more poignantly involved in the musical expression of religious sentiments than “emancipation.”

⁴⁷ George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), 224.

⁴⁸ Steiner, *Real Presences*, 218.

Here I allude not only to “the mystery of intuitions of transcendence” which Steiner finds celebrated in music “from the songs of Orpheus, counter-creative to death, to the *Missa Solemnis*, from Schubert’s late piano sonatas to Schoenberg’s *Moses und Aron* and Messiaen’s *Quatour pour la fin du temps*” (218). The “intuitions of transcendence” elicited by such music must ipso facto imply some form of emancipation, in the sense that anything experienced as transcendent must be deemed emancipatory. But we might also think of the spiritu- als created by African American slaves from the “basic material. . . [of] native African rhythms and the King James version of the Bible.”⁴⁹ So- called slave songs like “Steal away,” “Swing low, sweet chariot,” and “Gwineter ride up in de chariot soon-a in de mornin’ ” self-evidently convey the folk yearning for escape or emancipation in the most literal sense. We might also think of Jan Kenty Pawluśkiewicz’s *Nieszpory Ludźmierskie*, known also as the *Ludźmierz Vespers*, a choral work of 1992 whose words and music were composed to celebrate the recent emancipation of an entire nation from totalitarian rule, expressing an inspiration and gratitude in which any attempt by the listener to distin- guish between religious and secular (patriotic) motivations would be futile.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ James Weldon Johnson, Preface to his edition of *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals*, musical arrangements by J. Rosamond Johnson (New York: Viking, 1926), 12. For Johnson’s full account of the origin and development of the spirituals see his Preface to *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, ed. James Weldon Johnson, musical arrangements by J. Rosamond Johnson (New York: Viking, 1925), 19-25.

⁵⁰ These *Vespers* are addressed to a wooden figure of the Virgin Mary on the altar of a church in the southern Polish village of Ludźmierz. According to the Kraków poet Leszek Aleksander Moczulski, who composed the words for this work based upon Psalms of the Hebrew Bible: “The inspiration came from Poland’s achievement of independence. Giving thanks for the gift of freedom was personal, even intimate motivation”; quoted from the program notes (p. 9) to a performance of the work at Igreja da Nossa Senhora de Belém, Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, Lisbon, 2 June 1998. I am grateful to Agata Marczewska for providing me with these program notes, together with a recording of a performance of the piece.

In connection with African American spirituals, an interesting irony might be noted in closing. One commentator on those songs has made an observation which, by chance, aptly supports our reservations about Wach's idea of "the emancipation of art." During the years leading up to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, observes Miles Mark Fisher,

When the religious part of white society ascetically proscribed the emotional expressions of Negroes, which were vehicles of their religion, an artificial distinction was made between secular and religious music. The rhythmic and instrumental parts of it were called "balls" or dances, although the vocal scores also retained characteristics of the spirituals.⁵¹

The artificiality of trying to divide the spirituals into "secular and religious music" illustrates the broader potential deceptiveness of generalizing about art's "emancipation" from religion. Ironically, the 1953 book in which the comment above occurs was based on Fisher's doctoral dissertation, which, as is acknowledged in its preface (xii), had been done some years earlier at Chicago under the guidance of Sidney E. Mead, Amos N. Wilder, and Joachim Wach.

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⁵¹ Miles Mark Fisher, *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1953), 146.

SHAMANS AND LEADERS: PAROUSIAL MOVEMENTS AMONG THE INUIT OF NORTHEAST CANADA¹

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Summary

The existence of Parousial movements in Northeast Canada has remained largely unnoticed in the literature on messianic movements. Yet many Parousial movements flourished among the Inuit of Northeast Canada in the first half of this century. Recently, Inuit elders have shown themselves willing to discuss these movements with the authors. Their information sheds important light on the nature of these movements. On the basis of the existing literature, archival sources and oral information of the elders a new appraisal of these movements can be made. Eleven Parousial movements, some very poorly documented are discussed by the authors. They argue that the Parousial movements can be considered as attempts to integrate Christianity in existing Inuit beliefs and practices, notably shamanism. These movements developed in areas outside direct missionary control, and their development informs us about patterns of leadership and competition in Inuit society. Most of these movements were short-lived and ended by Inuit themselves. The negative assessment of these movements by missionaries and secular authorities often resulted in a distorted picture of these movements that can be corrected with the help of the information of Inuit elders. The Parousial movements constituted an important chapter in the history of Inuit religion and played an important part in the acceptance of Christianity as the combination of Christianity and shamanism turned out to be unsuccessful.

¹ We wish to thank the Inuit elders Rose Iqallijuq, Lucaasi Nutaraaluk, Samuel Arnakallak, Timothy Kadloo, Alain Ijraq and Georges Kappianaq, and especially the late Aipilik Innusuk, Hubert Amarualik, Michel Kupaq, Noah Piugaatuq and Martha Nasook. Thanks to Miss Dorothy Kealey (General Synod Archives of the Anglican Church of Canada) for her help in searching the archives. The following institutions graciously provided financial support: Fonds Gérard-Dion, Fondation de France, Fonds F.C.A.R. Preliminary research results were presented under the title *Maranatha in the Arctic: Parousian Meaning in Inuit Religious Upheavals* at the 21th Annual Conference of the Canadian Anthropology Society in May 1994, and at the 9th Inuit Conference Studies in June 1994. In the present article, elders' quotations come from Laugrand (1995) except when other references are indicated.

Introduction

The debates on messianic movements in the 1960's and 1970's focused on their explanation in terms of oppression, economic exploitation, social tensions, and acculturation². Such movements among the Inuit were hardly noticed, to the point that in 1974 Fokke Sierksma, author of a comparative study on messianic movements (Sierksma 1961) asked one of the authors of this paper if he could explain why the Inuit did not have any messianic movements at all. In fact, some descriptions can be found in the ethnographic literature (e.g. Mathiassen 1928: 235-236), but they were never thoroughly studied until recently. Today, the existence of more and more Parousial movements in different Arctic areas in Inuit history is coming to light³. As many of these movements turned out to be rather violent they are often explained in terms of deviant, erratic or fanatic behavior of the main protagonists. We opt for another approach. We do not regard these movements as social or psychological aberrations but view them as attempts to incorporate and integrate Christian beliefs and practices within Inuit traditions, resulting in new and original combinations that shed light on processes of religious change initiated by Inuit themselves. Two themes frequently recur in these movements: the presence of Christ and the imminent end of the world. Therefore we use the term Parousial rather than messianic that emphasizes on the leader of the cult.

The first half of the 20th century was a period of great religious creativity and experiments as Inuit tried to come to terms with Western religion and its forms of organization. Various alleys were explored that turned out to be unacceptable to the Canadian Government and Western Churches. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police's reports and missionary accounts emphasize fanaticism and erratic behavior, clearly

² See Voget 1959; Wallace 1956; Lanternari 1962, 1965, 1966; Thrupp 1970; LaBarre 1971 and 1976, Worsley 1968, Burridge 1969, Wilson 1973; Berthoud & Kilani 1982.

³ See Holland 1979, Saladin d'Anglure 1984, Townsend 1984, Laugrand 1997a, Grant 1997, Trott 1997 for the Central and Eastern Arctic, Kleivan 1986 for Greenland, and Fienup-Riordan 1988 for Alaska.

reflecting their negative attitude towards these Inuit movements outside their control. Their attitude affected Inuit elders who were not inclined to discuss the topic with *Qallunaat* (White people), so some of these movements remained largely unknown. Only recently the climate has begun to change. A revalorization of the past is taking place as Inuit have begun to take pride in their past again. Elders are now prepared to talk about these movements and we thank them for sharing their knowledge with us.

Encounters with missionaries in Baffin Island

At the foundation of the first missionary post in Baffin Island in 1894, the Inuit were not completely unprepared for Christianity. For hundreds of years Euro-Americans had been visiting the Arctic shores at irregular intervals, trading and exchanging ideas with the Inuit. Inuit had witnessed religious practices such as prayer, the celebration of religious feasts such as Christmas, and had become acquainted with the use of the Bible and hymnbooks in religious services. The extent of Western influence on Inuit beliefs and practices is hard to assess. In some reports of the middle of the 19th century (Warmow 1859; Gasté [1867] in Mary-Rousselière 1960) we already find references to a creator of the world that may have been suggested by Westerners. At the end of the 19th century, the *Qallunaat* have been integrated in the Inuit creation myth of the Inua of the sea that explains the origin of sea mammals as well as the White people and their specific capabilities (Oosten 1976; Sonne 1990). Apparently the Inuit were eager to learn and to accept what White society had to offer and religion was part of it.

In 1894, the first permanent mission in Baffin Island was established by the reverend E.J. Peck and his assistant the reverend J.C. Parker on behalf of the Church Missionary Society (Anglican) in Cumberland Sound, at Uumanarjuaq (Blacklead Island), close to Kikirten, the main whaling center in Baffin Island at the time. At first, missionaries were regarded with indifference by the Inuit, but relations quickly improved. Inuit provided for them if necessary, and the missionaries reciprocated when ships arrived with provisions for the missionaries.

At first, the services and catechisms were only attended to by women and children. The missionaries did not only instruct them in reading and writing, but also provided them with tea and biscuits. The images shown by magic lanterns, the singing of hymns and the medicine provided by the missionaries will also have attracted people. Diverse sources confirm that the textbooks prepared by the missionaries were widely read with great interest in remote Inuit communities. In 1901, a Parousial movement already developed in Kinngait outside the sphere of direct influence of the missionaries (see below Case 1). The missionaries may have had the impression that the Inuit were oblivious to religious instruction but the area was probably stirring with religious activity and excitement. Inuit were studying the texts and the words and the behavior of the missionaries, and started to adopt Christianity on their own terms. Even in distant places such as Kimmirut Anglican textbooks were already read and studied before the turn of the century (see Laugrand 1998). Nevertheless, it took almost ten years before the missionaries made the first public conversions. They mainly involved women and children, but we may assume that their husbands approved of the conversions of the women. There may have been some apprehension concerning the effects of the conversion on the relationship with the game. Nowadays, elders state that one of the main advantages of the conversion was that women no longer had to observe all the ritual injunctions to safeguard the relationship between hunters and game. Once the hunters had assessed that their relationship to the game was not affected by the conversions, the most important impediment to conversion was taken away. Conversion affected the position of the shamans. In the past, they were able to maintain and if necessary to restore the relationships with spirits because they had undergone an initiation and acquired helping spirits that assisted them with their tasks (see Blaisel 1993). But any Inuk could and would have his own experiences with game and spirits. Nobody would be the judge of that particular experience. But it had to be communicated to other members of the community. If it were kept a secret it might turn against someone or even against the community at large. In this respect Christianity introduced a

break with traditional ways of dealing with religious experiences, as the missionaries presented themselves as the ultimate authorities judging whether a religious experience was acceptable or not. This point is illustrated by the way missionaries reacted to Angmalik, who developed his own form of Christianity in 1904. It is generally acknowledged that Angmalik was a highly competent hunter and a great shaman. His attempt to come up with his own version of Christianity was a critical event in the brief history of the mission of Uumanarjuaq. Angmalik claimed to have received a revelation from the *inua* of the sea *Takaannaaluk*. The missionaries Peck and Greenshield were adamant in rejecting his version of Christianity. They awaited the results of the confrontation with some apprehension, and were greatly relieved when their perspective prevailed. Peck's report of the events in his diary illustrates the case:

A wonderful day. The Church was packed morning and evening. Hardly any of the men had gone hunting, and the attention and reverent behaviour of the people was quite remarkable. I naturally inquired what these things meant. This is the answer which I received, an answer which gave me great joy... they told me that having considered the new doctrine propounded by Angmalik, and having also considered the words they heard and read, viz., the words of Jesus, they had come to the conclusion that His words were in every way preferable, and therefore they had determined to cast away their heathen customs and come to the place of prayer (Lewis 1908: 319).

The defeat must have been hard on Angmalik, and it took a long time before he was finally prepared to accept Christianity on the terms of the missionaries. This was the reason that his wife Ashivak left Angmalik in a famous incident in which she publicly rejected Inuit beliefs and practices (Stevensson 1997: 89-90). After that the authority of missionaries was acknowledged and it was no longer challenged. In areas outside the direct influence of the missionaries processes of incorporation and integration of Christian ideas and practices into the wider context of Inuit culture could go on unchecked. It is particularly in those areas that a wide range of movements developed and flourished. Local leaders and shamans played a central part in these processes of incorporating the new ideas and practices.

Case 1: Seekooseelak (Kinngait area, 1901)

This case is the first documented movement in Baffin Island. The information mainly stems from a famous South Baffin campleader, Peter Pitseolak. The events he describes as “the first religious time” happened one year before his birth. He probably relied on the information provided to him by elders, notably his father Inukjuarjuk who was closely involved in the events of 1901:

Simigak was out hunting one night, sitting by the seal hole waiting for a seal to come up. All of a sudden he saw Jesus coming down to watch him. He thought it was Jesus but he was mistaken; it was Satan. When he returned home he told the people he had seen Jesus. Then Simigak said, “We must get together, everybody must get together,” and they all went to a place near Cape Dorset called Tooneen. There they built a giant igloo for a church. It had no roof so they could see the Heavens. Simigak was the chief in the Etidliajuk area. . . . But when they gathered in the big new church, Simigak’s cousin, Keegak, was outdoing everyone with the ceremony. In that church, the leadership passed to Keegak, -‘the messenger’, that was the meaning of his name. He became the leader because he strongly believed that Simigak had seen Jesus. He thought of a Keegak as a person who was looking after all the people like a God. Keegak was the God in the first religious time. In the giant igloo the people gathered to worship. Keegak was dancing and singing. He led the dances and he sang:

I am, I am, I am
I am the big God,
God thinks of me
I am
There in Sugluk,
There in Padlee (...)

Once he danced naked. He was a saint now and he no longer had any sins. He was dancing wildly. His male organs were swinging all over the place. His belly had red marks from dancing so wildly. He danced and danced. But the igloo had no roof and finally he began to get cold. Then he said, “I am going to Heaven! I am going up; I am going up.” He told everyone to get out of the igloo. “Everybody out; everybody out.” People were confused about what was going on. They began to get out. Inukjuarjuk was the last person to start to leave but when he was going Keegak stopped him. “We are both going up,” he said. He said this because he had borrowed Annie, Inukjuarjuk’s daughter.

But Simigak didn't like the idea that only two people should go to Heaven and he said, "You are not the only ones who are going up (...). We are all going up." Of course nobody got up. Finally Keegak had to go home because he got too cold. His penis had goose pimples.

After this, whenever Evitah, Keegak's daughter, went to visit people they used to ask her, "Has your father gone up yet?" She used to answer, "No. Because the Eskimo people have too many sins."

Keegak was singing in the igloo all the time. He sang that the same things were happening in other places. He saw that Sugluk people in Arctic Quebec and Padluk people around Pangnirtung had the same things going on. People thought Keegak had become a shaman because he could see what was happening in other places.

While the people were like this, they appointed a special person to cut the women's hair and shave the beards. Too much hair would drag the people back when they were going up. The women had cold heads! And Martha, Keegak's wife, would chew on the blubber and put the blubber oil all over the clothing, especially on the new clothing. She'd say, "You're too neat; you're too neat." Pretty soon Martha and Keegak were the only people who had good clothing.

This happened after Okhamuk — Reverend Peck — had preached to the people that they should not be so possessive of their things (...). So the people threw away all their good clothing and anything they had — rifles and beads. They kept their bad clothing and tried to have good hearts.

People threw away their food. Anything Keegak asked for he would get (...). People said Keegak was just like a white man — bossing everybody. All the other camps would bring him meat and he had even women who were not married to him making him clothes. He was a big boss now and he had white man's jacket made out of sealskin.

Martha and Keegak had never been powerful, but all of a sudden, power was waiting for them. They grabbed it.

In the first religious time when Keegak became a Christian nobody was killed in our land although around Pangnirtung there was a killing at this time. There were no killings here, but I think Keegak and Martha may have been trying to kill someone. In that giant igloo where they used to sing Keegak and Martha beat up two people. They were out of their minds, like white or Eskimo people when they are drunk. Keegak was jumping on the front side of a man who was lying on the ground. Martha was doing the same to a woman. The man's son told Keegak to stop jumping on his father so the man didn't die. The man was on the ground because he wasn't supposed to refuse if Keegak told him to do something. People

were thinking that when Jesus was crucified he wasn't fighting back. So this man didn't fight back. No doubt he was trying to copy Jesus.

But even then they knew they were making mistakes. Simigak, Keegak's cousin, told him that only my father, Inukjuarjuk, and Simigak himself would be going to heaven because everyone else was making too many mistakes to get up. Keegak realized then he was wrong and said, "We're going to go along with you."

So Keegak wasn't a Keegak — the leader — any more. When he realized his name was wrong he wanted to go back to his old Inuit name, Annoyak. Then he took his baptized name Jayko. He was really a friendly person. Most of the people liked him. He wasn't good looking but he had a good personality. He did some wrong but he was really a good person at the time he died . . . always trying to help with food. He died in 1923 and he is buried down in Etidliajuk in one of the two big barrels left by a ship (Eber and Pitseolak 1984: 40-43).

The religious experience of Simigak occurred at an *aglu*, a breathing hole of a seal, a privileged point of communication between the world of men and that of the game and spirits in Inuit cosmology (see Oosten 1984, Blaisel & Arnakak 1993). The appearance of spirits no one had ever seen before was a recurrent feature of Inuit shamanism. The name of Jesus was probably known to the Inuit at Kinngait at the time, but we may assume that there was not yet an accepted image of Jesus. His appearance in a shamanic vision at a breathinghole provided a way to integrate him in Inuit cosmology. We may infer from Pitseolak's account that the message of Jesus was that the Inuit had to build a church, a giant igloo without a roof. This conception constitutes a break with traditional shamanism as a shamanic seance always took place inside a house in the dark. All lights were extinguished when a seance was performed. It is not clear what Simigak expected to happen in this new church. Here, the initiative was taken over by Keegak 'the messenger'. Some shamanic competition may have been involved here, and Keegak may have outdone Simigak in claiming that he was God. Pitseolak notes that at this point Keegak took over the leadership from Simigak, suggesting that the adoption and integration of these new ideas and visions were closely related to the position of the leader.

Keegak claimed he was everywhere, a conception not altogether strange to the idea that a shaman was able to see and visit all places in the world. People assumed that Keegak had become a

shaman (implying that he was not considered to be a shaman before). Nakedness was often associated with shamanism. In some seances shamans used to take off most of their clothes. They were bound and in the course of the seance they freed themselves from their ropes. In this case the shaman took off all of his clothes and danced wildly in the half-open igloo. Clearly he intended to ascend to the sky (a well-known shamanic practice) and he required all people to leave the igloo except Inukjuarjuk whom he clearly considered as his father-in-law. His failure to ascend to the sky does not seem to have affected his position as it was attributed to the sins of the other members of the community. Pitseolak finally refers to the cutting of the beards of the men and the hair of the women and the spoiling of the clothes with blubber. The meaning of these acts are not indicated. Pitseolak observes ironically that only Martha and Keegak were left with clean clothes. He does not relate the end of the movement. The account of Pitseolak clearly indicates that in this case an attempt was made to integrate Christianity in Inuit culture by using a shamanic idiom, either by following shamanic practices or inverting them. People prepared themselves to go up in the sky by cutting their hair, spoiling their clothes, discarding their possessions and even throwing away their food. This behavior implies great risk in the harsh Arctic conditions and exposes people to imminent death. It is a recurrent feature of Parousial movements in the Arctic. The coming of the end of the world apparently required that people discarded their means of survival. Thus there only remained the choice between the Parousia and death. Keegak and Martha received all goods they asked for. Sharing is a central value in Inuit society and in the context of the cult it may have become a test to assess whether a person was prepared for the Parousia. In many respects Keegak adopted the behavior of a white man: he dressed himself like a white man, he behaved like a white boss. He seems to have required absolute obeisance of his followers. The latter feature contradicts traditional Inuit patterns of leadership where the campleader (*angajuq* or *isumataq*) had no formal authority. The violence in the act of trampling one of his followers is therefore

remarkable. Absolute commitment was required and no hesitation was tolerated.

The cult affected positions of leadership within the community and that is a recurrent feature of other Inuit Parousial movements. Pitseolak points out that Keegak and Martha grabbed power when they had the opportunity. But Pitseolak considers Keegak a good man. He points out that he was always prepared to share food. Pitseolak's respect for the cult leader reflects the esteem elders usually had for these people. Even though they made mistakes, they were good people.

Case 2: Iglulik (1920-1923)

In the early 1920s, missionaries had not yet traveled to Iglulik but Bibles and Hymnbooks put in circulation by the Anglican missionaries had already arrived up North (Mathiassen 1928: 235; Ross 1984: 141), along the traditional Inuit paths on the Southeast-Northwest axis. At that time, a shaman from North Baffin Island named Umik began to preach together with his son Nuqallaq, who is known to have murdered the trading officer Robert Janes (Sakirmia). Just after this murder north of Mittimatalik in 1920, the two men left North Baffin for the Iglulik area and founded a new cult. During the winter of 1921-22 more than 35 families among the Inuit in the camps of Ingnertoq, Pingerqalik and Iglulik were converted "in a flash" (Mathiassen 1928: 235) to Umik's religious movement. According to Emile Imaruituq "Inuit started following him, then his relatives came and then people from the whole community." The new religion spread rapidly and reached the Aiviling-miut camps of Ava and Apaq in Itibdjeriang (Mathiassen 1928: 236) in spring 1922. Mathiassen's companion Freuchen (1939: 404-405) provides few details on the movement describing 'Umiling' as a Christian preacher who tried together with his son to elevate the morality of sexual relationships by denying wife-exchange. Mathiassen (1928: 235) gives a more detailed description of the movement:

A movement from the north became more widespread. In 1919 some bibles came from Pond Inlet, printed in the Peck syllabic language with which the Eskimos were already familiar: they had been sent from Cumberland Gulf, where the missionary Peck had worked many years. These bibles were studied by the

Eskimos and one of them, Uming, acted as a prophet and taught the new gospel. When in 1920 his son had shot a white man at Pond Inlet, they fled together to Iglulik, where he appeared as a great preacher. When we came to Ingneritoq, the most southerly settlement of the Iglulingmiut in the winter of 1921-22 we saw a white rag on a pole outside the snow house and, when we arrived at the place we were surprised by the inhabitants shaking hands with us; even the tiniest child had to do it. Inside the snowhouse the crucifix (fig 203 in Matthiassen 1928) was hanging (...). We wished to buy it, but they were unwilling as they said it was a very powerful amulet. We met the same white flag and the same hand-shake at the more northerly places, Pingerqalik and Iglulik, signs that the inhabitants belonged to Uming's congregation. At Iglulik we met the prophet Uming himself, an elderly, intelligent man, who ruled there absolutely. Besides the hand-shake and the flag, his religion included abstention from work on Sundays, gathering now and then in his snow house and singing hymns which he had taught them, and, what is more, the hunters were to bring their booty to him and he would distribute it. His son, the murderer Noqatlaq, acted as a sort of assistant priest and did not lift a finger in hunting either. When people arrived at the settlement or departed from it, all the inhabitants gathered and sang a hymn, after which the hand-shaking commenced; even the dog's paws were taken. Uming was also a liberal man, permitted polygamy, offered to "lend" us his wife during our stay at Iglulik and continued to exchange wives for a year at a time with another man.

Umik exercised some control on the exchange of goods as well as of women (Saladin d'Anglure 1991: 15). Corporal McInnes (RCMP Annual Report 1924: 36) gives some additional information obtained during his trip of fifty-eight days to Iglulik in 1923:

The Iglulik tribe of Eskimos consists approximately of 35 families. (...) They are very enthusiastic over religion, which they follow in their own crude style, singing hymns and reading from their Testament several times a day. The most attractive pastime, however, is trying to count the number of the pages and the hymns. They demonstrate the fact that they are christianized by carrying a flag, generally white, attached to the komitik (dog-sled) when traveling, and while at the village they greet all arrivals by the grown population lining up side by side in the most prominent place in front of the igloos, when the arrival is within hearing distance they all join in singing a hymn. The arrival approaches the line-up within a few yards, then stops his komitik and remains standing until the hymn is finished. The singers then advance in single file and greet him with three shakes of the hand. (...) The same formalities are gone through on the return of a resident of the village if he leaves only for a few hours.

Four testimonies of elders deserve to be quoted here. Hubert Amarulik refers to the shamanic powers of Umik:

I heard about Umik when he was traveling here by ship. He had to go through Akaniqjuaq to come here and he was supposed to be here for at least a year. But as there was much ice up-there, the ship couldn't come here, so Umik returned the ship to Pond Inlet by using his spirits and his shaman's power (*angakulauqtut*).

Michel Kupaq also refers to the special capacities of Umik, notably his ability to change words: "You know these writings from the Bible, Umik would cover them up and show them to the other people. But after he had covered them on his body, there would be a different writing." Samuel Arnakallak relates:

Umik was one of the first persons who heard about Christianity in Iglulik. He originated from the Iglulik area. So when he came back in Iglulik from Pond Inlet, he started to talk about baptism and about Christianity. He had a son, Nuqallak. Umik used to talk a lot about Christianity, saying that if you died you can come back to life. He used to talk about the baptism too and say that through baptism, you could even see the dead people again... even their loved friends who might have been in graves for a long time, for more than a month. As they had never heard before that they would see them again, I think that's why people were greeting him for a long time. I am not a specialist of that, I just tell you what I remember about Umik.

Finally, Rose Iqallijuq provides some interesting details, which are not mentioned in the literature. She relates that Umik saw the relation between him and his son as that between God and Jesus:

Umik was Qiugaqjuk's father. At that time Umik was part shaman, part Christian, but maybe his mind was a little bit mixed-up. At that time, we were living in a very small island, my in-laws, Ittuksarjuat, Uttak and his wife. Imaruituq and Attarjuak were the only kids then. We were living in a very small camp. I was outside the tent with a baby. As we heard something, we knew that somebody was coming over by dog-team. Later we knew that it was Umik. As they were coming, Umik used to say "awa a, awa a." I was so scared that I started running to my camp, leaving my kid behind. The little kid was crying but I was still running to my in-law. As I went in their tent I said that some stranger was coming. My in-law asked me then, "what do you mean?" and I told him that I heard "awa a, awa a." Then my mother in-law told me that it was Umik. When Umik arrived, he said, "*Gutiu irninga, Qadlunaaq nunamut angijaqaumat*" meaning "God's son

has been taken away by White men to south." On the moment, I didn't understand, but after a while, I realized that his son had been arrested. A year later Umik came back but his lungs had decayed. He was working too hard, being a slave too much, and he died early. We didn't know Umik for a long time, because we used to live in a different camp. But I heard about him. Umik used to say that he was a very religious person, being himself a God. "God's son has been taken down south," that's what he used to say. Umik was a shaman and he was a Christian too. When somebody was coming from very far, he would know and tell you their names. He was probably all mixed-up, so his mind was probably not good. As Umik drew that ivory crucifix and carved it, he started praying for that. Umik was my *ittuliraqtara* (...). As Umik told me "pray this and then never change your religion again," I said "yes, but I only said yes through here" (pointing to her forehead). I didn't want to pray to that ivory stone, so I only said yes here and not inside. Umik was like that, he used to pray for this.

Umik's movement represents a version of Christianity developed by the Inuit without the direct interference of the missionaries. It may well be that there is a direct relationship to the murder of Robert Janes. Umik and his son may have tried to convince the Qallunaat that they were good people by becoming preachers. But there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Umik and his son. From the interviews with elders it becomes quite clear that Umik was seen as a religious person. The ethnographic reports emphasize the outward appearance of the movement describing the white flags and the handshakes. Mathiassen qualifies Umik as an "elderly, intelligent man" but only refers to Nuqallaq as a murderer. The ethnographers clearly find it difficult to conciliate the fact that Nuqallaq is a murderer with his role as preacher and they suspect that he is exploiting other Inuit to his own purposes: acquiring control of goods as well as of women. This type of skepticism is quite common in White perceptions of native movements. From the testimonies of the elders it is quite clear that they did not doubt the shamanic powers of Nuqallaq and we hear no comments on exploitation. The comments of Rose Iqallijuq are particularly insightful as they give us some information of the beliefs held by Umik and his son, which recall case 1: Inuit are identified as God or Jesus. As in the preceding case we see that the religious leaders appear to be shamans as well as campleaders. Clearly

the capacity to integrate Western and especially Christian ideas into traditional Inuit culture is highly valued. In the movement traditional patterns and new symbols were integrated: the crucifix was seen as a powerful amulet that could not be sold. Traditional patterns of wife exchange were continued. We also see the importance of literacy in the movement. Parts of the New Testament were read and hymns were frequently sung. We also find references to the absolute power of the leaders. But Rose Iqallijuq was not prepared to follow Umik and she handled the problem skillfully and did not confront him. The distinction between Christians and others was stressed in the ritual of handshaking, which included the tiniest child and even the dogs. The combined use of handshaking and flags seems to express the creation of a new community. The idea that one should see the dead again suggests eschatological aspects but we lack the data to assess their nature more precisely. Elders continue to speak of Umik with great respect. Rose Iqallijuq relates that he was a shaman as well as a Christian. Apparently the movement was an attempt to transcend the dilemma of being either a shaman or a Christian. Like Keegak, Umik was both.

Case 3: Kangiqsuk (Payne Bay, 1920)

Saladin d'Anglure (1984: 503) gives a brief description of this movement:

About 1920 at Payne some Inuit began to announce the end of the world; they killed their dogs in order to follow biblical prescriptions. Jesus being about to arrive, everyone gathered to pray while awaiting him. Unmistakable signs were apparent a little earlier in the neighboring Wakeham area: a down-covered newborn baby began to talk and then died.

Whereas in cases 1 and 2 we can only suspect the expectation of the end of the world, it is quite explicit in this case. The end of the world is announced by portents such as the birth of a child covered with the down of a bird. The dog had a central place in Inuit cosmology as the ancestor of various peoples, and it played an important part in mortuary rituals. Dogs were essential to winter seal hunting and winter traveling. In Inuit society the killing of dogs was the last step to prevent

starvation. By killing dogs people virtually exposed themselves to extinction. Yet it is a recurrent feature of Inuit religious movements in the first half of this century. Saladin d'Anglure states that the Inuit followed a Biblical prescription but unfortunately we do not know what text or prescription is relevant. Apparently we are dealing with a pattern that by eliminating the sheer necessities to survive the end of the world is hastened.

Case 4: Home Bay (1921)

The religious movement at Home Bay was instigated by Neakuteuk. He was employed by the Sabellum Trading Company, which had a small trading post at the Bay of Kivituq (White 1975: 41). At that time, Inuit in the area had been in regular contact with Christianity for several years. Various people coming from Cumberland Sound had settled here, but no missionary had yet arrived. According to Peneloo, Neakuteuk experienced difficulties in reading and understanding the Bible. He requested that people would hit him on the head whenever he left the igloo so that his understanding would improve. The plan worked well. Although Neakuteuk lost a lot of blood, he stated that from now on he was able to understand what he read. During the Christmas celebrations Neakuteuk announced that he was Christ (RCMP 1923: 35). According to Wallis, he simulated the hanging of Jesus from the cross. People clustered about him, knelt, and kissed the hem of his robe. He appointed two disciples and selected three messengers to whom he gave biblical names to carry the doctrine to all peoples (Wallis 1943: 115).

The momentum of the movement increased as Neakuteuk began to prophesy: "You are all to love one another for so it is written." There would be no more wives and husbands: "the women have to take off all their clothes and jump around (...), and the men must have sexual intercourse with their mothers" (Ruskin 1972: 33). According to Neakuteuk, the end of the world was near and they had to prepare for it. He told his people that they had to go without food and sleep and threatened them frequently with a knife and a gun. He forced them to kill several of their dogs (RCMP 1924: 37). Returning to his

igloo he fired with his gun at the walls, shot in the air to kill angels and finally declared he was God creating the thunder. Anticipating his approaching death, Neakuteuk decided that he would baptize the whole world with his blood. He inflicted a wound on his head and declared: "You are baptized in my blood." When a blind man "goes to him asking to have some wind inside so that he can go up to Jesus," Neakuteuk declared that it was time to kill Munyeuk for he was now "full of God's spirit and later might be bad." Then Kautak and Kedluk killed the blind man. After the murder, Neakuteuk required that the two men killed three of their dogs (Ruskin 1972: 33). Neakuteuk did not stop here and also required that Lemik be killed because he could not read or copy the Bible. When Neakuteuk was about to kill Lemik's wife with a hammer, one of his own cousins, Kidlapik, wounded him mortally with his gun. In agony Neakuteuk continued to state that he was Jesus and therefore immortal. According to the reports of the RCMP who questioned those who witnessed the death of Neakuteuk, his remains were buried with exceptional care. Sgt Joy reports that his body was washed and that the water was sprinkled over the lamps. One of the lamps started to sing "to the effect that its flame was everlasting and could not be extinguished" while at the same moment the corps of the deceased began to breathe again, laughed and placed its hands on its head. A man named Takoshaga then sprinkled three drops of this water mixed with blood on the head of all adults and children (RCMP 1924: 37). Today, those who remember these happenings remind each other that on the tomb of Neakuteuk was written: "It is not good for man to take the place of God."

The descriptions of the movement of Home Bay evoke well-known topoi of messianic movements. Neakuteuk is depicted as an illiterate and simple guy who came from bad to worse and finally fell victim to the consequences of his own misguided actions. But when we read between the lines it is clear that Neakuteuk was a powerful leader held in esteem by those who survived him. The reports relate that people believed that to some extent he came to life again as he had predicted. During his life, his followers were prepared to obey him and to perform the executions he demanded. As in the case of Umik,

not everybody followed him. Murder was not taken lightly in Inuit society, and clearly Kidlapik felt that Neakuteuk went too far and saw no alternative but to shoot him. Various features of the movement recall those we have discussed above such as the identification of Neakuteuk with Jesus, the killing of the dogs, the concept of the messenger, the expectation of the imminent end of the world, the baptism and the dancing, or running around naked. As in the case of Umik we find a complex and creative integration of traditional and Christian elements. An interesting feature is the wounding of the head, which occurs twice. The first time it provides Neakuteuk with a better understanding of the Bible, the second time it serves to baptize others with blood. The aspect of wounding oneself recalls shamanic practices, and the first wounding may well have had the connotation of a shamanic initiation. The image of Neakuteuk hanging on the cross like Christ recalls the crucifix of Umik. The image of the crucified Christ sacrificed for the salvation of humankind seems to have appealed to the Inuit. It may have also evoked the symbolism of shamanic initiation where symbolic death and revival often occur. In choosing messengers Neakuteuk clearly conforms to a Christian model.

The idea of a general exchange of men and women was a well-known feature of traditional Inuit religion. Here it acquires a new meaning. Not only do the relationships between husbands and wives cease to exist, men should even have intercourse with their mothers. A transgression and inversion of social norms seems required to establish a state of perfection anticipating the coming of the end of the world. This need for perfection seems also to be the motive for murdering two imperfect people, one who is blind and another who is supposed to be unable to read or copy the Bible. Here the movement meets its end as some people present realize that things are getting out of hand.

The ritual procedures following Neakuteuk's death are of utmost interest. In traditional beliefs there used to be a close association between soul and lamp, and a mother could hide the soul of her son under the lamp to make him invulnerable. The relationship between lamp and soul is evoked when the lamp becomes immortal and

Neakuteuk comes to life again. Moreover, the water that had effected this miracle was mixed with blood and sprinkled on everyone. We may infer that in this way everybody benefited from the powers of immortality associated with the water in which the corps was washed. Thus, the prophecies of Neakuteuk were validated and his reputation and memory honored.

Case 5: Cape Dorset area (1925)

Eber (1997: 146) relates that in the autumn of 1925, at a camp two hundred fifty miles from Cape Dorset:

A young man named Makogliak went insane, apparently from religious mania; he was noticed behaving strangely, and he told one at least of the party that he heard a voice from the clouds telling him to kill all the people of the camps.

Three days later he shot and killed his father Kovianaktoliak, his mother Klowa, and Kimipikalook, an elderly widow who had been one of the wives of Inukjuarjuk, a great south Baffin leader. Lucaasi Nutaraaluk, whose father was a cousin of Miqualaq, relates that Miqualaq committed three murders, both his parents and a third person. He shot them after hallucinating that there was a spirit that kept telling him something. After a while he started to believe this spirit. Some portents preceded the affair:

He heard something terrible about the camp. He traveled to his grandparents and talked about this. He said he was shooting at his dog team and they would make a whispering sound, but they never died. So what he was doing, was using his father's dog-team to go visit his grandparents and because of this experience that he went through, this triggered this whole thing to wipe the camp out (Lucaasi Nutaraaluk in Laugrand, Oosten and Rasing).

A month after these murders, Miqualaq started to live with the family of Lucaasi's older brother again, even though some relatives tried to dissuade Lucaasi's older brother from doing so. Lucaasi related that Miqualak was getting stronger and people were afraid of him and tried to make him talk. They put all the weapons away inside an iglu. When he returned people told him that he could get killed if he did not change his mind. Even though it was very cold he did not wear a

parka or mitts. Miqualak said: "Inuit and white people will know of me." People tried to get him into a more sensible frame of mind. He said: "I was forced to have no father and no mother." As Miqualaq was coming into the same state of mind again, Lucaasi's father asked Lucaasi's elder brother to kill Miqualaq by throwing him into open water. He said: "I'm becoming frail and weak and if we let him be he will become more dominant and eventually take over because of it." Finally it was decided to kill Miqualaq. According to Lucaasi:

Miqualaq was thrown into the open water during the winter. First, he went down, then he went back up again, right back up, floating, bobbing. He was tied up his hands behind his back, he was tied up, and he came up already without being tied up again. (...) To everyone's amazement, he was just floating like a harp seal. My father said: "Please let someone help us." As soon as he said that he went down under, my father said At the south end of the water, he popped up through there. When he popped up through there he went through the cracks of the ice (...). So my father checked over to see if he went on top of the ice. And of course no wonder he didn't see him. The current took him under. This is between Uumanarjuaq and Natsilik areas (Lucaasi Nutaraaluk in Laugrand, Oosten and Rasing).

The murders were triggered by abnormal events. A voice spoke from the clouds and dogs whimpered but did not die when they were shot. The behavior of the dogs caused Miqualaq to consult his grandparents. In this case we are not dealing with a killing of dogs, but with a failure to kill dogs. The position of the dogs is marked as in many other cases. The notion of immortality, which also played such an important role in the preceding cases recurred in the attempts at killing Miqualaq. Finally, human beings proved to be unable to kill him. Only the current proved to be able to do that once Nutaraaluk's father had requested help. The request illustrates the power of the words of the elders. The killing of the parents indicates that we are not dealing with an ordinary murder where the victims usually are non-relatives. It implies a denial of kinship relationships just as the sexual intercourse between mothers and sons in case 3. Miqualaq intended to wipe the whole camp out, whereas the whole camp proved unable to kill him without supernatural help. The account of Nutaraaluk

indicates that Miqualaq was killed because he was growing in strength. It was felt that he would succeed in his purpose if people let him be. In the description of his death we find shamanic motives: he transforms into a seal, he goes into the water with his hands tied up on his back and comes up with his hands free, and he cannot be killed without supernatural assistance. We do not hear whether Miqualaq was expecting the end of the world, but we find some of the elements that were supposed to precede the end of the world in other cases. Finally, Miqualaq was killed by his own kinsmen who felt things were getting out of hand, just as in the case of Neakuteuk (case 4). He was killed by his relatives, not because of the murders he had already committed but to prevent more murders. Close kinsmen had to take action when someone became a threat to the whole community.

Case 6: Tasiujaq (1931)

Concerning the case of Tasiujaq (Leaf Bay), about 80 km east of Fort Chimo in New-Quebec, we present a synthesis of various documents. Christian ideas already circulated for several decennia. The reverend Stewart of the Colonial Church Society began his work at Port Burwell in 1899. It led to the establishment of the first permanent mission post at Fort Chimo in 1903. After Stewart left Fort Chimo in 1930, missionaries sometimes visited the area. In 1931, 150 Inuit were living in this area. According to a RCMP report 112 were Christians. In 1930, a missionary asked a local leader, Miller (Malla), to keep an eye on the religious life of the community. A year later, 1931, the wife of Miller announced that she had died and come to life again (Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 503). Intensive religious activities developed in the area. The HBC District Manager warned the RCMP. According to the RCMP report, Miller became so enthusiastic in his reading of the Old Testament that after hearing the revelation of his wife he announced that he had also become a missionary: "It was decided that the Apostles had taken Inuit forms and, following the example of the people of Israel, everyone should wear distinctive symbols on their clothing, such as moons, suns, and Jacob's ladders" (Saladin d'Anglure 1984: 503). Visitors should also be honored by

songs and processions around the tent in the direction of Sila. The whole community should celebrate the ritual of communion by sharing the blood of Christ in the form of tea (Saladin d'Anglure 1991: 18). According to the RCMP report, a whole series of ritual practices was performed. Inspired by the chapters 29 and 39 of the Book of Exodus Malla's followers attached colored ribbons to their clothes, and Malla designed various ceremonial mats (sun, rainbow, throne, new stars) (RCMP 1932: 81-82; Grant 1997: 169; 174). Ceremonial handshaking, circling houses and persons, singing hymns appear as recurrent features of the movement. Malla marched them about the settlement singing hymns. "When they approached a house or an incoming sled they marched around it, causing some alarm to the white population by tapping the corners with a stick" (RCMP 1931: 81). The members of the movement were beginning to neglect their hunting and daily work (Grant 1997: 168). There was a rumor that two Leaf River women were to be stoned to death because they were barren (McInnes in Grant 1997: 168). Although the information on the killings could not be confirmed and was even denied by the inhabitants of the colony, it scared the authorities. Moreover, two sons had threatened to beat up their father if he refused to join the movement. On the request of the HBC district manager the RCMP sent Corporal McInnes to intervene. He took Miller to Fort Chimo for interrogation. He told Miller he would let him return home if he gave his word that on return to Leaf River he would "quit all these foolish performance, tell the Leaf River people that they had made a mistake, and await the arrival of a proper missionary to instruct them from the Bible (...). Otherwise he would have to come to Port Burwell" (Grant 1997: 176). Miller solemnly gave his word on his handshake and the movement seems to have ended here.

Various features of the movement are familiar by now. First of all it was triggered by a religious experience of immortality. Miller, already the leader, immediately used the opportunity to increase his authority by claiming to be a missionary. Just as in the cases of Umik and Neakuteuk distinctive symbols were chosen that marked the new community of believers as a distinct group. They testify to the fact that

the Inuit were quite familiar with Christian symbols but applied them in their own way. The ritual performed shows many traditional patterns such as the songs to welcome visitors and the circling of the house in the direction of Sila, that is the direction of the sun's movement (see Blaisel 1995, Saladin d'Anglure 1989). The people also developed their own form of community. The idea of the messengers is present in the idea that the apostles had appeared as Inuit. The elimination of imperfect people is represented by the rumor that two sterile women had been killed. References to shamanic rituals and behavior are not explicit. It would be interesting to have recordings of the memories of elders who had heard about this movement. New features might well come to light.

Case 7: Iglulik area

Two movements developed in the winter of 1941.

7a) Kubvuk (1941)

For several months the camp of Ittuksarjuat had been lacking food for the dogs but surprisingly nobody dared to go the long way to other camps such as Pilik or Nalinar where several families were living. The *Codex Historicus of Pond Inlet and Iglulik* dates the events on 25/01/1941. It does not explain why people were not willing to go. The Inuit of Kubvuk seemed paralyzed and waiting for something to happen. The Oblate missionary who came to visit the Inuit relates that according to the Inuit the Anglican minister had announced one year before that the end of the world was near and that the Lord would descend on earth on Christmas 1940. But nobody had seen him (*Codex Historicus of the Mission of Pond Inlet and Iglulik*, 1941: 106).

7b) Orki (1941)

A similar movement occurred at the same time in the neighboring winter camp of Orki. In the *Codex Historicus of the Mission of Pond Inlet and Iglulik*, the missionary dates these events on 31/01/1941. He emphasizes the fear that reigned in the camp. According to Inusituarjuk, Issigaituq, Anguititaq and their families, the Reverend Maurice

Flint had visited the camp last winter and made some prophecies. The Oblate missionaries note that some feared that the earth would open itself to devour them (*Codex Historicus of the Mission of Pond Inlet and Iglulik* 1941: 106).

In the first case the lack of food for the dogs is specifically mentioned. The expectation of the end of the world is clear, and we wish we would have more information about the nature of the beliefs and practices. In this case as well as in the preceding case the *Qallunaat* assumed that they had ended movement by their intervention. This may be slightly naive, but the negative attitude of *Qallunaat* towards these events will certainly have an effect on those events. In this case further research among elders on the decisions which led to the end of the movements in the Iglulik area would be worthwhile.

Case 8: The Belcher Islands (1941)

The religious movement in the Belcher islands in 1941 is well documented⁴. Several years before the beginning of the movement Alik Kiktuviaq, a catechist of 46 years of age, prophesied that “the man-God Jesus will indeed come to the Islands, and soon” (Sala in Sullivan 1944: 17). At that time about 200 Inuit (155 according to the report of RCMP 1941: 154) lived on the island in small camps (Lechat 1955: 12). They had all been in close contact with Christianity for many years. The winter of 1942 was very harsh, and game was scarce. The people of the Island intensively studied the New Testaments distributed by the Anglican minister (Lechat 1955: 12). One night, the Inuit witnessed a rain of falling stars (Lechat 1955: 12) or meteors (RCMP 1941: 154; Kinmond 1941a, b, c). A young shaman named Charlie Ujaraq, 27 years of age, interpreted these phenomena as infallible signs. According to St. Matthew “...the stars shall fall from heaven... and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds...” (Kinmond 1941a). On January 27 1941, Ujaraq proclaimed that the end of the world was near and that he was Jesus Christ himself (RCMP 1941: 154; Lechat

⁴ Desgoffe 1955; Holland 1979; Townsend 1984, Saladin d'Anglure 1984, 1991 give accounts of the main features of the movement.

1955: 13). Peter Sala, an elderly hunter and leader of the camp, immediately joined Ujaraq and became his disciple proclaiming that he himself was God. The movement rapidly spread and soon involved the whole community (RCMP 1941: 154). The two men preached that Jesus would come soon and Sala stated that "his spirit has entered into me" (Phillips 1956). They also declared that in view of the coming of the end of the world all material goods had become useless. Some people killed their dogs; another one destroyed his rifle (RCMP 1941: 154; Lechat 1955: 13). Other Inuit remained skeptical towards the prophecies. Thus, on January 26, Sara Apaukuk, a young girl, thirteen years of age, declared at a meeting on the Flaherty Islands that she did not believe in them. Her elder brother struck her with a stick (Alik Apawkok). Then she was killed with the butt of a rifle by Akivik, a widow, and Mina, the sister of Sala (RCMP 1941: 154; Lechat 1955: 13). Upset by the crime, the catechist Alik Kiktuviaq decided to leave the camp. On January 27, after a quarrel between Ujaraq and Sala, the latter struck Kiktuviaq with a harpoon, and one of his disciples, Adlaykok, shot him with a rifle (RCMP 1941: 154; Lechat 1955: 13).

Two weeks later, on February 9 1941, in the camp of Tuokaraq (Campbell Island), Ali Ipuk, the son-in-law of Peter Quarak, stated that he believed in God, but did not accept that Ujaraq was an incarnation of God. Ujaraq was infuriated and accused Ipuk of being a demon. He asked Quarak to kill his son-in-law by shooting him. Ali Ipuk was killed by several bullets on the spot (RCMP 1941: 155; Lechat 1955: 13). On the instructions of Sala the corps was covered with stones, but the customary rules were not respected. Thus the stones were thrown on the corps from a distance and it was only slightly covered (RCMP 1941: 156). According to the report of the RCMP the growing tensions culminated in a final outburst close to Tuokaraq on March 29:

At the camp Mina's zeal increased. "Jesus is coming," she prophesied to the women and children, "Take off your clothes and go out on the sea ice to meet him." With wild gestures and wilder threats of the evil that would befall those who didn't obey, she frightened her listeners into submission. (...) Thirteen in all, six adults and seven children followed Mina out on the ice. (...) Asserting that material things were no longer necessary, the crazed woman took off pants

and other clothing of the children. (...) Then she departed, leaving them at the mercy of the chill arctic air. (...). Four of the adults managed to reach safety: Mina's husband, Moses, aged 22; Nellie (...); Peter Sala's wife and Quarack's wife, Sara. With them they brought Peter Quarack's other daughter, Mary, and Moses and Quarack, the two young sons of Peter Sala. The other six perished. (...): There were two adults, Mina's widowed sister, Kumudluk Sara, aged 32, and her mother, Nukarack, aged 55. Four children died: (...) Moses, (...) Joanasie, Kumudluk, and Sara's natural son (RCMP 1941: 156).

The RCMP was warned about these happenings and arrived on the spot on April 1941. After a summary inquiry three of the murderers were taken to Moose Factory. Seven Inuit appeared in court on August 19, 1941. Sala and Adlaykok were each condemned to one year of imprisonment, Ujaraq to two years, but he died May 27, 1942 (ACC/GSA/Fleming Papers M70-1, Series 3-B, file 29 #290).

The foundations of the movement were laid by Alik Kiktuviaq who later fell victim to it, when he announced the coming of Christ. By this prophecy he prepared the announcement of Ujaraq that he was Jesus Christ himself. As in other cases the movement was triggered by a portent, the falling stars, interpreted as the sign of the actual coming of Christ at the end of the world. Peter Sala, the leader of the camp, immediately joined Ujaraq by proclaiming himself to be God. The movement rapidly spread. The killing of a young girl professing that she did not believe in Ujaraq was the turning point. As we have seen before, the relatives of a prophet may decide to turn against him when a killing occurs, because they feel things are getting out of hand. Alik Kiktuviaq turned against Ujaraq who then requested Alik's father-in-law to kill him. Ujaraq prevailed in this contest and Alik was duly killed. The accusation that Alik was a demon and the description of the burial ritual indicate the seriousness of this conflict. Once this murder was accepted by the community, the momentum of the movement seems to have increased, finally resulting in the disaster on the sea ice, when several children and adults were frozen to death. The movement from land to the sea ice was apparently marking the transition to Christianity. It recalls the ritual of conversion practiced in North Baffin Island that consisted in eating forbidden food, e.g. by

mixing caribou and seal meat, called *siqqiqtiq*, its original meaning referring to the movement of caribous from the land to the sea-ice (Laugrand 1997b). In this case nakedness and exposing oneself directly to Sila (the weather, the outside) were steps taken in the expectation of the imminent end of the world. The disaster on the ice must have been a heavy blow to the movement. The end of the world did not come and many people had died. The presence on the scene of the RCMP was decisive, but we may suspect that the movement had already lost its momentum because of the disaster on the ice. Unfortunately we do not know what the reactions of Inuit themselves were. Elders might give more information. The fact that Ujaraq was a shaman may have increased his authority in interpreting the sign of the fallen stars. Alik was accused of being a demon associating him with the shamanic complex. Just like the events in Tasiujaq, the movement received much publication because of its extreme nature. In most of the cases we discussed before the movements were checked by kinsmen of the prophet before it got completely out of hand. Once people were killed, kinsmen of the prophet tended to interfere. In this particular case the community proved unable to hold the momentum of the movement in check and the result was a disaster. Above all, these events illustrate how closely leadership and religious innovation were connected in the partnership of Ujaraq and Sala.

Case 9: Milliit Island (1940's)

According to Saladin d'Anglure, the movement at Milliit Island occurred approximately in the same period. On the island between Inujuaq (Port Harrisson) and Puvirnituq, a clairvoyant woman prophesied that Jesus would return on a beautiful day in June after the disappearance of the ice. She had a big igloo built for prayer and dancing and invited single persons to marry and rearranged married couples.

The timing of the coming of Christ in June contrasts with the prophecy in the Iglulik case expecting the advent of Christ at Christmas. The construction of the igloo and the marriage arrangements evoke the traditional exchanges of wives in the feasthouses in pre-Christian times.

Case 10: Cape Dorset (1944)

Father Fafard describes a tragic episode in the area of Cape Dorset at the end of the 1940's (Fafard, 1944: 10-12). He views these events as the tragic results of the irresponsible distribution of Bibles (red books) by the Anglican missionaries.

Epidemics of meningitis in the area had affected more than fifty persons and killed twenty others after three months. An Anglican named Gisiasi (Josuah), father of three children and a devoted reader of the Bible, decided to search the Texts in order to discover which spirit caused the epidemics. After vainly trying to establish contact with the spirits of the other world, Gisiasi lost interest in everything else and even stopped hunting. When he became short of blubber and food he made his last remaining daughter, four or five years of age, to participate in the fast. The other hunters became more and more concerned by the behavior of Gisiasi and visited him regularly to hear the "fantastic dreams of the illuminated one" to the point that the movement affected the whole camp (Fafard 1944: 11). Soon all hunters abstained from hunting and the fox traps were abandoned as all days were spent with Gisiasi. When he made a failed attempt at suicide in the midst of February, the other members of the camps lost all confidence in him. All weapons were taken away from him, he was bound and brought to the nearest trade post. It was more than 35 degrees below zero. Gisiasi asked that his dying daughter be placed in a box beside him on the sledge. On his journey to the post together with his wife and his daughter, Gisiasi continued to have "diabolical visions" (Fafard 1944: 12). While it was vainly attempted to revive the dying daughter, Gisiasi was enclosed in a snow house waiting for the RCMP based at Lake Harbour to fetch him. Father Fafard comments that the poor father did not shed a tear and even assisted at the funeral of his daughter. The Police prohibited any lecture of the Bible to Gisiasi except on Sundays, and two months later Gisiasi had recovered completely (Fafard 1944: 12).

The origin of the movement seems to involve a combination of Christian and shamanic elements. Gisiasi wanted to come into contact

with spirits by studying the Bible in order to discover the origin of sickness. Once this attempt failed, he stopped hunting. Although no reference is made to the end of the world his behavior recalls the inertia referred to in the case of the movement at Kubvuk. It suggests that Gisiasi had come to expect the end of the world. The fact that other hunters gave up hunting in order to listen to him points in the same direction. No reason is given for the suicide. Gisiasi may have given up hope that his expectation of the end of the world would be fulfilled. His attempted suicide was a turning point as the hunters decided to turn him over the RCMP. His daughter became the only victim of this movement. The behavior of the father at the funeral struck Father Fafard as insensitive. We wonder whether the case should be considered as a case of female infanticide and whether a sacrificial aspect may have been involved.⁵

Case 11: Moffet Inlet/Siuralik (1946-47)

In 1946, a religious movement developed in the area of Admiralty Inlet. The Reverend J.H. Turner left Pond Inlet, where he was established since 1929, for Arctic Bay to save his flock as soon as he heard about it. According to a member of the RCMP (NAC/RG 85 vol. 1017 file 18101) who had traveled in the area, there had been exceptionally high tides, which had been interpreted in different ways. A woman named Eekoma related that she had gone up to the sky and had seen Jesus and other deceased persons. She now possessed the "power to look down into the hearts of men to discern which were bad and which, good." Her husband Ahlooloo became her disciple and announced that he had received part of her powers. Other members of the family joined: Evalak and Kepilk adopted the role of evangelists. According the RCMP report "certain aspects of the old shaman religion were incorporated, apparently, into the ritual, principally the practice of one revealing to the rest all the evil thoughts and intentions which he possessed." At the beginning of the winter of 1947, the movement gained momentum and spread to three other camps situated between Arctic

⁵ See Oosten and Remie 1997 for a discussion of female infanticide.

Bay and the trade post of Admiralty Inlet. Kongasuretook, Oolayoo and Ameemeeakjuk also became leaders of the movement. New phenomena were observed: "Spirits walked on the roof, various utensils in the igloo moved by themselves." But if "a number of new followers were enlisted (...) there was also adverse reaction among the Eskimos." Warned by two Inuit (Flint 1949: 49), the Reverend Turner sent letters to the new prophets and then traveled to the area himself. Flint quotes from Turner's diary:

Alooloo's wife began acting strangely last fall. She set herself up as a teacher and to give authority to her words, pretended to be able to perform ridiculous little miracles. (...) Some visitors from Fury and Hecla Straits (...) became influenced, so much that they all became abnormal (...). The false prophets had mixed a little Scripture in with their teaching with the result that a number of the Eskimo were half inclined to believe them. The whole affair was obviously the work of evil spirits, and one fellow under their influence claimed to be God. When he arrived, however, at Christmas, he immediately confessed his wickedness. (...) He found much comfort in Psalm 51. Alooloo and his wife (...) seemed sorry for what they had done (Flint 1949: 49-51).

Father Mary-Rousselière who had shortly arrived in Mittimatalik after the events relates that a woman was thought to have died and came to life again. She had obtained disciples and taught that the end of the world was near (Mary-Rousselière 1949: 11). Trott (1988: 40) gives a brief description of the movement:

One of the women in this camp claimed to have heard the voice of Jesus giving her a special mission to call the people to repentance. She attempted to establish a rigorous moral code, and is said to have demonstrated her powers by having people shoot at her through the tent canvas (This was the claim of contemporary informants in Arctic Bay). Her messages were promulgated throughout the district by her father and brother, and attracted a great deal of attention from the other Inuit. Inquiries during the fieldwork period were deflected by a reluctance (...) most informants claimed that everybody was involved except for themselves. This would suggest that the movement was indeed widespread and the RCMP and HBC reports indicate that hunting and trapping throughout the area virtually stopped.

Shamanic elements in this movement were clearly marked as was noted by the RCMP report: the ascent to the sky, the visit to the dead,

the spirits walking on the roof, the utensils flying through the air, and the capacity to observe the true intentions of people. The fact that she had herself shot is also a well-known shamanic feat. The movement follows a pattern similar to other movements: relatives join in and claim a share of the power of the prophet. The belief in the imminence of the end of the world is accompanied by an abstention from hunting and trapping. One person also claimed to be God. Like some other more recent movements it was stopped in its tracks by the interference of the minister and the RCMP.

The perspective of Inuit elders

Looking back, Inuit elders think these movements went too far. In his autobiography P. Pitseolak states:

At that time, when people were changing, they believed the wrong things. They were so mixed up they overdid their religion. The first religious time took place in 1901, the year before I was born. When you tell a story about these people who were overdoing their religion it sounds as if they were all drunk. They were blind to what they were doing (Eber and Pitseolak 1984: 40).

Their ideas are seen as outside the right track: Aipilik Innuksuk says with respect to Umik:

I only heard how Umik became a religious person. But his religion was besides Roman Catholicism and besides Anglicanism. It was something else. Uming and Qallutiaq started this kind of religion but there was also another person, I forgot his name. These people used to see a person, very light, shining around his head. Their religion was really overdone. It was overdone. Jesus said in his own words: "I saw the devil, the Satan" (*Satanasi*) and he can do anything. For instance, he can be like God and have certain bright light, he can also do certain parts of things in that way. So Jesus said that he saw that Satan which could be like many angels. It's written in our Bible.

Timothy Kadloo concludes with respect to Neakuteuk:

Niaqutsiaq (Neakuteuk) was my father's uncle son. He was working for a trading company but he had another job. He was one of the helpers, like a priest. He was becoming crazy. He was really mixed-up so he was really sinning, doing bad stuff and he got crazy. He was going to be so crazy that someone didn't agree with him and he was killed. All the others were so afraid of him, of what he was doing, so they killed him.

Although Timothy Kadloo judges harshly with respect to Neakuteuk, some religious leaders were still considered with respect. Michel Kupaq states with respect to Umik: "neither catholic, nor anglican, but something else, a religious person (*ukpirtuujuviniq*), who had his own beliefs." Noah Piugaatuq adds: "Umik knew many things about religion. That's why he became a religious person." Martha Nasook, wife of the famous Anglican Minister whose parents used to live with Umik, confirms that he was neither catholic nor anglican but "he had his own beliefs." Georges Kappianaq qualifies Umik as "a very religious person" (*ukpirtummarialaursimajuq*), but also "a kind of mixed-up." He had always been "a powerful man," but "when he got sick, his power was getting away and he had no more power when he died." Kappianaq concludes: "If he didn't have called himself a God, he probably would have lived longer," and evoking Wallis confers about Neakuteuk: "It's not good for man to take the place of God." The elders are well aware that the attempt to combine Christianity and shamanism turned out to be failure. Lucaasie Nutaraaluk states: "Gisiasi was unconscious and really sick. He was taken to Lake Harbour. He was a big hunter before but he got sick. Maybe he got really sick because he put Christianity and shamanism together."

Anglicans, Catholics and Inuit

The eleven cases presented above are by no means exhaustive. We assume that more cases will come to light, and systematic research on those movements still has to be conducted. Moreover, other trends also existed which we have not discussed here, such as attempts to turn away from Christianity or to restore shamanic religion (see Choque 1985: 117-18).

The movements occurred in: South Baffin (Cape Dorset 1901, 1925, 1944) North Baffin (Iglulik 1920-1923, 1941, Home Bay 1921, Moffet Inlet 1946-7), the Eastern Islands in Hudson Bay (Belcher Island (1941), Milliit islands (1940)) and Ungava Bay (Tasiujaq 1931; Kangirsuk 1920).

The Keewatin area and the Netsilik area are conspicuously absent. No Parousial movements occurred here. The movements all occurred

within the sphere of influence of the Anglican mission at Blacklead Island, but outside its direct control. The Anglican mission cultivated the strategy of spreading religious texts notably Bibles and Hymnbooks among Inuit. Thanks to the translating and editing work of Peck, the Gospels were soon available in Inuktitut and syllabic writing to the Inuit of South Baffin Island: Matthew in 1895, Mark in March 1896, John in 1897 (AN\MG 17 B2\CM.S.\A. 119; see Laugrand 1998: 18). These texts were often studied without direct guidance of the missionaries and stimulated the development of Inuit forms of Christianity. The development of such movements close to Blacklead Island was virtually impossible, as they would immediately lead to a confrontation with the missionaries as was illustrated by the abortive attempt of Angmalik at the very beginning of the conversion process. In the case of Angmalik the community was faced with a dilemma and opted for the version of Christianity represented by the Anglican missionaries. This choice may have implied more than a decision upon the truth of the versions of Angmalik and the Anglican missionaries. It also implied a decision upon leadership and authority in religious matters. By accepting the spiritual authority of the missionaries the community seriously limited the options of their own leaders, who had to accept the authority of the missionaries. Within that framework leaders were encouraged to take responsibility and become lay preachers. Well-known examples are Peter Toologarjuaq and Luke Qillaapik who as lay preachers had great autonomy and replaced the Anglican missionaries after their departure in 1914.

The Catholic missionaries attributed the development of the new religious movements among the Inuit to the indiscriminate spread of religious texts by the Anglicans. We may agree that without Biblical texts less Parousial movements would probably have developed. But the spread of Christianity would also have been slower. There are no reasons to endorse the negative assessment of these movements, which the Oblates shared wholeheartedly with their colleagues. The Oblate missionaries tried to prevent movements such as in Kubuk by a strategy, which aimed at control of the information provided to the Inuit. They did not spread Biblical texts and they were only

prepared to spread Christianity when they could keep an eye on the results by their presence in the community. They were not inclined to delegate religious authority to Inuit leaders and tried to visit their flock as much as possible. In many respects Catholic missionaries were closer to Inuit and more prepared to adopt Inuit lifestyles. The correlation between conversion and the introduction of a Western lifestyle was less obvious to them than to the Anglican missionaries who assumed that Christianity and civilization were intimately connected. The Anglican strategy aimed at a rapid spread of its ideas and this strategy proved to be successful as far as the divulgence of Christian ideas was concerned, but it had consequences the Anglicans had not reckoned with.

These differences in strategy explain why Parousial movements developed in areas under the influence, but outside the direct control of the Anglican Mission, whereas such movements did not develop in the Keewatin and Netsilik areas, that were predominantly the sphere of influence of the Catholic mission, but, apart from the Igluligaarjuk area, outside its direct control.

Leaders and shamans

The most common terms for camptleader were *isumataq* (North Baffinland) which means 'the one who thinks' and *angajuqqaq* (South Baffinland). An *isumataq* was ideally a good hunter with capable sons who used his mind well and gave good council. In Inuit society respect for elders, capable hunters, and men of knowledge was at once socially required and practically essential. In most Inuit communities powerful leaders could be found whose authority was hard to contest (famous examples are Ittuksaарjuat and Inukjuarjuk). The role of the religious leaders was crucial in the Parousial movements. In almost all movements we find individuals who acted as leaders and came into conflict with rivals opposing them. Inuit society has often been described as egalitarian, flexible and slightly anarchic. Mauss (1905) attributed a form of primitive communism to Inuit who were sometimes supposed to share everything they had: food as well as women. But on closer scrutiny a different image emerges. Although sharing was

highly valorized in Inuit society, it did not imply that everything was equally shared. Poor hunters, widows and orphans were completely dependent on the families of good hunters. Explicit status hierarchies existed in society, the campleader making the most important decisions while considerable authority was exercised by shamans and elders. Just as shamans had to prove continuously their control of the spirits, so campleaders had to demonstrate their capabilities as hunters and leaders in managing the relationship between hunters and game each hunting season. If a campleader were a good hunter and effective as an *isumataq* much would be accepted of him. Shamans and campleaders might sometimes be real bullies, but what mattered was their efficiency. Powerful campleaders might also be shamans. The combination might strengthen their authority. In the development of Parousial movements leadership and shamanic vision were expressed in the claim to be God or Jesus. Once this claim was recognized leadership was ensured. Alain Ijiraq emphasized the authority of the leader in his discussion of Umik:

I heard about Umik but I don't know what to say about that. I am talking about what my parents and other elders used to tell me. Pilakapsi was a shaman back then, Arulaq (Orulu) maybe, but they had their own beliefs at that time. Back then, people used to have their own beliefs and they used to follow their leader (*isumatariuq*). People used to follow one person's rules at that time. People would then do what they were asked for: do this, do that. That's how it worked back then.

The religious leadership that developed in the Parousial movements was not something completely new. A case in point is the extraordinary migration from Baffin Island to Greenland leaded by Qitdlarssuaq in the second half of the nineteenth century (Mary-Rousselière 1980) in which many people died in their quest for a land of abundant game. The power and strength of his vision must have been enormous to induce his people to follow him into the unknown.

It is not quite clear how the Inuit perceived these leaders. In pre-Christian society anyone could have visions of or meetings with spirits. Thus the distinction between shamans and ordinary people was never very strict, but difference in competence and prestige were important.

Competition between shamans was a structural feature of shamanism. Access to the study of the Bibles and Hymnbooks provided a new field of spiritual experiences. Those who had mastered the syllabics and came up with plausible interpretations of the texts entered into a competitive arena where they posed a challenge to shamans as well as to campleaders. The integration of Western and shamanic elements was essential to the development of Parousial movements. The new rituals exhibited a variety of combinations of Christian and shamanic elements that are difficult to separate from each other and were essential to the developments of these movements that tried to integrate Christianity within existing patterns of Inuit culture. Thus the church built by Keegak combines features of a church with that of a traditional feasthouse or *qaggiq*. In several cases a close cooperation developed between a recognized shaman and the camp leader of the local community.

The end of the world

The idea of the imminent end of the world seems to have appealed to the Inuit and was clearly one of the notions most easily adopted in the Parousial movements. Existing beliefs in the end of the world may have contributed to the acceptance of Christian eschatological ideas in Inuit culture. Rasmussen (1929: 252) refers to the destruction of the world by Sila (the spirit of the universe). Père Gasté notes that in 1869 the 'savages' feared that the earth would open and vomit flames. In 1941, the Inuit at Iglulik feared that the earth would devour them. It is difficult to asses to what extent these ideas developed under Christian influence but they provided a fertile ground for the belief in the imminent end of the world on the basis of Biblical texts. In most of these movements the focus was on preparing the end of the world. The imminent end of the world required a new morality. The authority of the religious leader had to be accepted, material goods and interests were forsaken, and distinct rituals and symbols were developed identifying the believers as a new community.

We hear very little about the consequences of the end of the world. The coming of the end of the world might imply that all regular

hunting activities stopped or decreased, that dogs were killed, or hunting implements destroyed. The believers abandoned their earthly possessions and wordly activities in preparation for the New World. Going up to the sky or even death might effect the shift from the present imperfect world to the new one. Shamans used to travel to the land of the dead or up to the spirits. In Parousial movements the religious leaders (cf. Keegak) or the whole community were about to enter a New World. The leaders of the movement often claimed to be Christ or God and those who contested this claim risked their lives. No one was permitted to endanger the Parousia.

The Parousia constituted a break with the past. In this respect it contrasted with the traditional winter feasts celebrated in the fall. Then, the community used to renew its relationships with the spirits of the dead and the game. In South Baffin the *inua* of the sea was called upon to come up from the sea (see Blaisel & Oosten 1997, Saladin d'Anglure 1989). She ascended from the bottom of the sea and was harpooned by shamans. Sexual intercourse between men and women representing the *inua* of the sea and her fiancee was an integral part of the celebrations. Mutual agreement between humans, spirits and game was ritually re-enacted in a context of renewal of socio-cosmic relationships. Some features (such as various forms of general general exchange) of the Parousial movements recall the winter feasts. But the Parousial movements did not aim for renewal of existing relationships but for a complete break with the past. They implied a rejection of customary rituals and beliefs. Previously, the world used to be conceived of in terms of exchange relationships with other kinds of inhabitants living within the same universe. In the Parousial movements a direct relationship to God and/or Christ, thought to be already present on earth is the crucial issue. In this respect the Parousial ideas corresponded to the preaching of the missionaries that conversion implied an absolute break with the past. Today, elders relate that one of the main advantages of conversion was that women did no longer have to cope with the many ritual injunctions regarding food and game. The ritual of *siqqitiq* as described by Laugrand (1998) conveys this idea of conversion as a transition to an easier way of life, without the dangers

involved in the spiritual relationships with the spirits of the game and the dead. The coming of the end of the world required an absolute commitment, which all too often ended in violence and disaster.

In the fifty years that these religious movements developed in different areas, the attempt at combining shamanism and Christianity gradually lost momentum. From the official accounts by *Qallunaat* it emerges that their presence and intervention stopped the movements. In most cases however, especially in the earlier period, Inuit stopped the movements themselves. It appears that the ease with which the last movements were ended had much to do with the fact that the established churches had acquired firm roots in Inuit culture and that a combination of shamanism and Christianity was no longer considered as viable by most Inuit.

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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE *BORI* CULT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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Summary

The paper examines factors responsible for the survival of the *bori* cult as a way of immortalizing *maguzanci*, i.e. Hausa traditional religion in Northern Nigeria. The paper regards *bori* as a part of *maguzanci* which survives as an island within the ocean of Islam.

The paper reconstructs the origin and history of the *bori* cult in Hausaland. It locates this within *maguzanci* — from its earliest belief in "pagan" spirits (*bab-baku*) to the introduction of "Muslim" spirits (*farfaru*) when Islam was introduced in Hausaland. Soldier spirits reflect totem spirits, famous hunters and war lords, while Fulani spirits mirror the advent of Fulani contact with the Hausa. The presence of European spirits in the *bori* cult reflects the pre-colonial and colonial epochs, a time when Europeans were in contact with Hausaland. The introduction of spirits from other ethnic groups in Nigeria into the cult merely mirror the interaction between Hausa and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Thus the history of the *bori* cult reveals layers and historical epochs of Maguzawa contact with other peoples and cultures within their environment.

The paper attributes the survival of the *bori* cult to a number of factors, among them the feminine nature of the cult, its control and domination by women and its provision of freedom for women, unequalled by both Islam and Christianity. Furthermore, *bori* provides an avenue for socio-cultural performance, festivals, and other types of interaction, and offers traditional medical and health care services to the public, factors that have endeared the cult to both members and non-members. The firm belief of the Hausa in the existence of spirits even in contemporary times to aid to the growth of *bori*. In a nutshell, this paper establishes that the major

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factor for the survival of the *bori* cult in a predominant hostile Muslim environment is its flexible and dexterous nature, particularly in accomodating Islamic practices alongside "pagan" ones.

Introduction

It is three thirty p.m. on the 24th of February, 1990, and the Bauchi Radio Corporation was playing its programme on "Peoples and Events" in Hausa. *Ikon Allah Baya Karewa*, "Gods wonders and miracles never ends" were the first words the presenter used. He continued, "A girl of nine in Ungwan Jahun here in Bauchi town has now become the centre of attraction, for she and her parents believe that a spirit *Iska* had appeared to her and had given her medicine for all sorts of ailments" ... The reporter then went on to say that while he was interviewing the girl, about fifty women and twenty men were waiting for the girl to prescribe medicine for them. The girl claims that she can cure different types of ailments (Shuaibu 1990:1 ff.).

While discussing *Ikon Allah*, the "wonders of God," exhibited in the life of a *bori* possessed Muslim girl and priestess, Maijidda (see the citation above), whom she interviewed in Bauchi town Shuaibu (1990:35)¹ mentions a paradox. She locates this paradox in the reporter's speech, where a *bori* spirit appears to Maijidda, a Muslim girl, a situation which the radio reporter, though himself a Muslim, describes as *Ikon Allah bayu karewa!* — "the wonders and miracles of God never ends!" The Muslim reporter sees no contradiction at all between the power of *iska*, a *bori* spirit, and the power of *Allah*, God. Such a paradox, where Hausa Muslims react thus to the sporadic appearance of *bori* spirits in human society is not surprising at all, especially when viewed from the backdrop of the traditional Hausa world view. The Hausa world view exhibits a strong belief in the existence of spirits and their interaction with human beings. It is this strong belief among Hausa people in the influence of spirits on human affairs that forms one of the bedrocks

¹ Mrs. Adama Shuaibu interviewed Maijidda, the spirit possessed girl, together with her grandfather on 17/5/1990. A. Shuaibu wrote a MA. Dissertation on the Bori Cult in Buachi and Jos Towns for the Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos, in 1990.

upon which the survival of the *bori* cult in a predominantly Muslim environment hinges. The sporadic appearance of Hausa spirits when they seem to have been forgotten and relegated into the background by Islam has contributed to the interest in this topic. This paradox reflects the Hausa belief in the existence of spirits. When spirits appear, the phenomenon is referred to as *Ikon Allah!* — “God’s power/miracle!” They are thus tacitly accepted in an Islamic environment as coming from Allah, God himself. This paradox serves to emphasize the existence of the institution of *bori* as a contemporary cult in the predominantly Hausa-Muslim societies of Northern Nigeria.

This paper is about *bori* and the resilience of its cultic practices in contemporary Nigeria. It analyses the factors that have led to its survival as an important aspect of Maguzawa-Hausa traditional religion and culture in a predominantly Muslim domain. Here the *bori* cult exists as an island of indigenous Hausa religion and culture in the midst of the hostile ocean of Islam, and it is today the strongest preserving agent of Maguzawa-Hausa traditional religion and culture in Northern Nigeria. This paper is divided into six sections: The first section briefly clarifies the concepts of *bori* and Maguzawa, while the second examines the origin of *maguzanci* (*maguzci*), the Hausa indigenous or pre-Islamic religion. The spirit world of the Maguzawa is discussed in the third, and the fourth evaluates the role of women in the *bori* cult. The fifth deals with the process of historical adaptation within the *bori* cult as a strategy for its survival. Islamic factors for the survival of the cult are analysed in section six. The conclusion provides a critique of the factors for the survival of the *bori* cult using a hermeneutical approach.

Defining Bori

In his monograph *Hausa Customs*, Madauci (1968:77) refers to the *bori* cult as *devil possession*. He asserts that,

In Hausaland, you will find, here and there, groups of people who have faith in devil possession. If you should ask those “possessed” by the devil, they will tell

you that they do not practice the ritual for pleasure or for fun, but to help the public with "protection" of all kinds and cures for all kinds of diseases.

From the point of view of Madauci it is clear that *bori* means devil possession, and he is not alone in this thinking, as it is common in Hausa society to ask a normal person who behaves abnormally, *kana bori ne?* Translated, this sentence means, "are you mad/insane?", or simply, "are you possessed?" (*Ibid.*: 77 ff.). Among some Hausa people, and some scholars, the word *bori*, which symbolises mediumistic possession, is therefore also synonymous in ordinary everyday usage with the term "madness," or "spirit possession." It is, however, more commonly used to describe temporary madness and ecstatic possession.

A number of versions of the term *bori* is found in some African countries. For instance, Tremearne (1914:393), traces the term *bori* to the Mende of Sierra Leone, who are believed to have a spirit known as *binni* which runs about during initiation ceremonies. Among the Mende, male members of this cult are known as *bori*, while their female counterparts are called *mabori*. The male members wear caps resembling those of *kuri* (*kura*), a Hausa spirit/deity of the hyena. In Liberia, a virgin girl before her initiation is known as *boni*, and she is later referred to as *baroa*, while the youths go to the *beri* institution for a few months for initiation. The term *bori* is found among the Maguzawa of Kano and Katsina (Abdu 1990:v), whereas it is known as *boli* in Sokoto (Shuaibu 1990:86). *Bori* means spirit, which in Hausa is translated as *iskoki* or *aljanu*. The *bori* cult, therefore, denotes a spirit possession cult, a cult where members allow themselves to be possessed by spirits in a deliberate ritual invocation dance (see Danfulani et al., *forthcoming*).

Bori as a term is used in this paper as belonging to the Maguzawa adherents of Hausa traditional religion. The history of the Maguzawa is intrinsically linked with and inseparable from that of the Hausa, since the one belongs to the other. In fact, the origin of the Maguzawa, who today inhabit parts of Kano, Katsina, Daura, Zaria and Bauchi, and are found all over Northern Nigeria must be sought in the his-

tory of the Hausa.² The Maguzawa of Kano who are known as the Kutumbawa were the pre-Jihadic rulers of Kano. They refer to themselves as the first inhabitants, and therefore the autochthonous people of Kano. The Maguzawa of Katsina prefer the term Katsinawa, which means “the indigenes of Katsina.” Grace Abdu draws attention to the sinister, but friendly joking relationship which has existed for ages between the Maguzawa of Kano and those of Katsina. The Maguzawa of Kano are said to describe those of Katsina rather derisively as “repairers of broken calabashes and leather buckets”, citing the proverb “*gerte karshen sana'a*,” i.e. repair work is the last or most inferior of all occupations (Abdu 1990:v).

The term Maguzawa supposedly emanated from the Arabic *majus*, meaning “pagans.” Another version states that it emerged from the name of the pagan ancestor of the Hausa known as Bama. Bama is said in a myth to have refused the Muslim prayer, *sallah*, since whenever he was invited to prayer he would reply, *sai gobe*, meaning, “until tomorrow.” He was called *Bama gujen sallah*, that is, “Bama-runner-away-from prayer” because he always ran away from prayer. Bamaguje, the Hausa singular for Maguzawa, reflects the possible rejection of Islam on their part since the term could easily have been derived from *maguji* (sing.) and *maguda* (pl.) which both mean “runner(s)-away-from”, fugitive(s) or deserter(s).³ Though this myth provides some information on how the name probably came into existence, it may, however, still portray the disdain and apathy with which Hausa Muslims regard the Maguzawa adherents of Hausa traditional

² The history of the Hausa in its own turn is linked up to some extend with the history of other Chadic-speaking ethnic groups, including those of the Jos Plateau, Bauchi, Yobe, Borno, Adamawa and the Federal Republic of Chad (cf. Abdu, 1990, p., v ff., Adamu 1974 and Crowther 1962). This connection, however, has been grossly neglected by historians, both past and present.

³ The Gwandara have a similar connotation associated with their name. Gwandara is a short form of the sentence, *Gwandarawa-da-Sallah*, which means “we prefer dancing to praying,” this being the reason for the peoples’ migration from Kano to the regions of Keffi, Lafiya, and Nasarawa, in present day Nasarawa State, in the 17th century, or even earlier (See Isichei 1982:17).

religion. The Maguzawa are still regarded by their kinsmen, the Hausa Muslims of Kano, Katsina, Zaria and other cities of Northern Nigeria as *arna*, that is "infidels" (Abdu 1990:v).

Origin of Maguzci (Maguzanci)

A cursory examination of the origin of *maguzci*, the Hausa indigenous religion, is important because religious ritual and *bori* rites were closely intertwined in pre-Islamic Hausa society (Abdalla 1991:40, cf. 1981:120). The Kano Chronicles, said to have been written in the 9th century,⁴ report that the early settlers of Kano had a shrine near the Dalla Hill and their religion was centred round their deity *Tsomburuburai* and its priest Babushe who resided near it (Shuaibu 1990:25, cf. Crowther 1978:30). Early settlers of Kano are said to have been giant animal hunters and blacksmiths who came to the Hill of Kano in search of iron ore, because it was believed that a village near iron ore reserves would prosper and grow from trade in iron implements (Crowther 1978:30). They settled near the hills of Dalla (known as *Gworon Dutse*, meaning the bachelor stone), Maguam and Dutsen Famisu,

since it was believed that certain powerful protective spirits (iskoki) lived in the great granite hills or inselbergs scattered over Hausaland, people might gather near them for protection. The Dalla hill in Kano is one such example (*Ibid.*).

These rocks were also thought to represent the ancestral fathers of the Maguzawa (Shuaibu 1990:35).

Iliyasu-Yero (1991)⁵ states that the first leader of the Maguzawa was Babushe who lived on top of Dalla Hill (located today in Kano). Babushe was very powerful and performed magico-religious and sacrificial rites associated with the hill. The name of the sacred place where they worshipped their god *Tsomburuburai* was Kukawa. The term *Tsomburuburai* denotes spirit beings whose abode was the sacred tree Shamuz, and the priest and keeper of this sacred tree was

⁴ This author believes that the date for its documentation may be much later.

⁵ Mallam A. A. Iliyasu-Yero wrote a long essay on the *bori* cult.

called *mai-tsumburburai*, meaning, “owner of the spirits/gods.” The tree Shamuz was surrounded by a wall and no one could come near it except Babushe, whoever else entered would die. Babushe himself never descended from Dalla Hill to Shamuz, except on two days of their ritual celebrations.

When the days drew near, men and women came in from all directions, with black dogs, black fowls and black he-goats,⁶ for sacrificial rituals, meeting on the day of *jajibere*, the eve of the ceremony, at the foot of Dalla hill. At dusk, Babushe would descend from his house with his drummers.

Babushe would cry:

Great fathers of us all,
We have come right to your dwelling,
In supplication, *Tsomburburai*!
Look on *Tsomburburai*!
You men of Kano,
Look forward to Dalla!

The people would answer:

Babushe would shout:

I am heir of Dalla,
Like it or not follow me,
You must perforce!
You dwellers on the rock,
Our Lord *Amane*,
We follow you perforce, Lord!

The people would answer:

Later they would undress and go round the shrine (*Ibid.*). This suggests a form of wild orgy usually associated with olden “pagan” rites.⁷ Babushe would then select his best and trusted headmen who would accompany him to the premises where the sacred tree Shamuz

⁶ Pre-Islamic Hausa gods and spirits cherished black-feathered birds, and black-skinned animal sacrifices.

⁷ Compare this with the festival which Israel gave before the golden calf, while Moses was still on Mount Sinai. The phrase “rose up to play” may well include sexual orgy (see Exodus 32:6).

was, bowing down to *Tsomburburai*. Only Babushe, the *primus-inter-pares* would enter the shrine, emerging after some time to announce to the people what would happen during the year and season to come. Again this suggests some form of divination which procrastinates the future in early Maguzawa religion. Babushe would tell them of a time to come when strangers would grow large in Kano and would wrest power and the government of Kano from their hands, and that a mosque would be built on the site of their sacred tree. John Paden stressed the sacredness of Dalla Hill when he said:

Dala Hill is of such primordial importance that it becomes the only survival of the first inhabitants of Kano in the memory of the modern. The power of the sacred Hill is so permanently fixed in the Hausa tradition... (Paden 1973:40, cf. Abdu 1990:12.).

Affirming the importance of Babushe during this early period in the history of Kano, Crowther (1978:31) asserts that Bagauda who is said to be the grandson of the legendary Bayajidda was not the founder of Kano, as suggested by the legend. Kano was already a large settlement around the Dalla hill, ruled by powerful priest-kings who controlled a large area of the surrounding country side. The rulers of Dala were backed by the power of *Tsomburburai*, of which they were priests. Thus at first Bagauda shared power with the priest-kings of *Tsomburburai*. It was only the ninth ruler of the Baugauda dynasty who finally destroyed *Tsomburburai's* shrine between 1349 and 1385 (*Ibid.*, Adamu 1982).

Krusius also emphasized the importance of sacred trees in *maguzanci*, the Hausa traditional religion, when he asserts: "the first thing to do before newly founding a house is to plant the *jigu*⁸ and to pray for *Kure*'s blessing while offering sacrifices" (Krusius 1915:36, cf. Abdu 1990:12). *Kure* the hyena is a totem animal among the Maguzawa since it is worshipped as a deity.

⁸ It is possible that the roots of this tree possess both medicinal qualities and strong stimulants used for making the *jiko*, a highly intoxicating drink, empowered by certain herbs soaked in water for some days.

Another important sacred totem animal is in the form of a snake. This is preserved in the *Bayajidda* myth where the legendary father of the Hausa who arrived from the East had to kill a snake in Daura because it prevented the people from drawing water except on Fridays (cf. Lange 1996). This exists today, in the form of a serpent or species of a snake which is the totem of nearly every Maguzawa community in the Kano region, in areas like Kano City itself, Roni, Rano, Gwarzo, Karaye, Tudun Wada, Bichi, Dawakin Tofa, Wudil and Kiru; and in other places such as Katsina, Bauchi and Zaria. In these places, the Maguzawa jealously guard the secret of their cult and their yearly *Sarkin Noma*, the Chief farmer's fertility ceremonies or seasonal rites of passage, is closely connected with other cultic worship rites.

The Spirit World of the Maguzawa

From the foregoing it is clear that belief in spirits, *iskoki*, which forms the backbone of the religious tradition of the Maguzawa has been a part of the religion for a long time. The Maguzawa, unlike most ethnic groups in West Africa, place emphasis on belief in spirits, *iskoki*, which dominate their world view. Thus the spirits take pride of place in the daily affairs of the Maguzawa people. The spirits, *iskoki*, not the deities, as is the case with ethnic groups such as Yoruba, Igbo and Ashanti, nor the ancestors as it obtains among Bantu speaking groups of West and Southern Africa, form the core of the Maguzawa-Hausa traditional world view. The spirits, *iskoki*, and spirit possession, *bori*, thus dominate their worship and religion. This, however, does not in any way obliterate belief in God, *Ubangiji*, the mystical forces, deities and ancestors in *maguzci*, the Hausa traditional religion. What then is the structure of the Maguzawa world view? The Maguzawa world view portrays a picture similar to those of other African people, viz: belief in the existence of spirit, human and mystical realms. This paper dwells only on their spirit world.

Ubangiji, God

The spirit world of the Maguzawa even though dominated by the belief in spirits recognises belief in *Ubangiji*, God, and belief in deities and ancestors. However, the last two are usually treated as a part of the world of spirits. Even though the creator is acknowledged by them as *Ubangiji*, God, and is referred to in masculine terms, he is not an object of direct worship having no sacrifices, liturgy, priests nor shrines. Gorialwala made the following observation about the concept of the Supreme being among them:

The Maguzawa admit the existence of Allah and they believe that he is the Supreme Being who created the whole universe and controls it. He is all powerful. But, He is not central being for them as He is for the Muslims. They neither worship him nor seek His help, nor invoke Him in prayers (1986:49).

The belief in God may have been informed in *maguzci* by the powers of natural phenomena, such as weather, storms, thunder and lightning, the sky, sun, moon and stars. He is believed to live in the sky (*Ibid.* 25). His attributes include, among others, *Ubangiji iyayengiji*, Lord, father of the Lords (Lord of Lords), *Mai iko duka*, the Almighty, *Mai Tsarki*, the Holy one, and *Mai Sama*, the owner of heaven.

Iskokki, Spirits

Bori spirits may be divided into two major groups: *iskokin gona* are tame spirits who settle on farms near human beings. With the introduction of Islam, these were referred to as the *farfaru*, fair-complexioned spirits, or *yan birni*, town dwellers. They were said to have “converted to Islam”, based on the belief that the prophet Mohammed, *sallalehu alewa salah*, descended into Hades and preached to the demons, converting some of them to Islam! The second category are the *yan dawa* (or *yan daji*), the wild bush dwellers. Also called *bakaku*, the dark-complexioned ones, it is held that with the coming of Islam these remained largely “pagans.” It is generally believed that tame spirits are easy to manipulate and hence potentially more friendly to human beings than the wild *yan daji*. The *farfaru*,

the fair-complexioned ones, who are regarded as mainly “Muslims” are believed to cause only mild ill-health to human beings, bestowing good fortunes on them. Whereas *bakaku*, the “pagan” or “non-Muslims” spirits, who dwell in the bush, are regarded as dangerous spirits, believed to afflict human beings with serious illnesses and misfortunes (Abdalla 1991:43, 1981:119, 175, Monfouga-Nicolas 1967:133).

The *bori* cult teaches that spirits existed prior to *Adamu* (Adam), human beings, as the creatures of *Allah*, God. *Bori* cult members are taught that *Annabi* Suleimanu (King Solomon) ruled over both men and spirits at a time when spirits were visible to humans, and he could converse with spirits. The Biblical Queen of Sheba who visited King Solomon during his reign is considered as Bilkisu Queen of the spirits. After the reign of King Solomon, God decided to make them invisible to human beings. However, by worshipping a member of the community of spirits a *bori* member can keep both him/herself and his/her family secure (Shuaibu 1990:87).

Like human beings, the spirits are regarded as religious beings who practise their own religion with all seriousness. It is held that the “Muslim spirits” behave like Muslims, observing all rites and rituals obligatory for Muslims. They pray five times a day, observe the forty days *ramadan* fast, give *sadaka* (alms), pay their *zakat* (tithe), and perform all Islamic feasts observed by Muslims in the *terra firma*. Some among them, such as *Mallam Alhaji*, who is said to be the patron in charge of the *Koranic* school in *Jangaru*, city of the spirits, are believed to have even performed the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca. “Pagan” spirits drink beer and animal blood, smoke tobacco, enjoy the perfumed and incensed air of the dancing field during *bori* possession ceremonies and perform other *tsafi* (“pagan”) festivities such as rites of passage as “pagans” do (Ottenberg 1960).

All *bori* spirits move with the speed of lightning and like wind, thus they are called *iskoki*, “winds,” or *iska*, “wind”. They need constant sacrifices because they feed on sacrificial blood, even though they still prepare their own food themselves as humans do. Their contact

with human beings is mainly through sickness.⁹ In answer to what *bori* is all about, an informant¹⁰ said, *bori ciwo ne*, meaning “*bori* is a disease.” He continued, “I wouldn’t have been a *bori* member had it not been for the fact that the spirits selected me through sickness, I would have been doing something better.” Nobody resists the call of *bori* spirits to cult membership because of the fear of suffering continuously from a severe illness. It is believed that one may be tormented to the point of permanent mental insanity or death.¹¹

Historical Adaptation and Dexterity of the Bori Cult

From the onset it is clear that the history of the Maguzawa is situated within that of the Hausa, and the one can not be divorced or isolated from the other. *Bori* being a part of Maguzawa religion and culture today therefore symbolises a part of the process of development and experience of Hausa traditional religious history. The historical process of *bori* cult spirits started with the emergence of totems, followed by a progressive introduction of a number of spirit types into the system.¹² These include among others the entrance of “pagan” *bori* spirits/rural dwellers, enlistment of soldiery *bori* spirits,

⁹ The exception includes medicine persons and powerful human beings possessing the knowledge of how to communicate with, trap and manipulate spirits as their slaves, a belief which strongly survives among the Hausa even to contemporary times. This belief is used, for example, to explain sudden wealth, thus one is asked not to question the source of sudden wealth of a pauper, since one may not know whether s/he met a ‘good spirit’ which made him/her rich overnight! Spirits also form the focus of many Hausa legends, stories, folk tales, fairy tales and mythology.

¹⁰ Mallam Abubakar Mai *Ungwan Bori* in Bauchi Town gave this information to Adama Shuaibu (1990).

¹¹ As is the case with mediumistic divination in most of Africa *bori* cult membership are mostly called through ill-health, except those who inherit their membership from deceased parents.

¹² Gelfand (1959) traces a similar progressive development of the emergence of possessing spirits among the Shona of Matabeleland, in the form of spirits of diviners, hunters, alien spirits of soldiers and Europeans who fought, lived and died in Masholand; and the appearance of the dreaded avenging *ngozis* spirits.

the conversion of some *bori* spirits to Islam who then became Muslims, and the arrival of Fulani *bori* spirits, European *bori* spirits and finally other ethnic Nigerian *bori* spirits, in that strict order.

Many traditional Hausa totem spirits became *bori* spirits, especially the bush lion, the hyena, certain species of snakes, the monkey, the crocodile, and a number of other animal species which were venerated, respected and protected in various parts of Hausaland prior to the introduction of Islam. In such societies, taboos and many prohibitions ensured that such totemic animals were not deliberately harmed or killed. All Maguzawa, for instance, worship *Kure* (*Kura*), the hyena, as a deity. However, all these totemic animals have over time come to be recognised within the *bori* cult as *bori* spirits. When such spirits possess people, the “horses/mares”¹³ so possessed would behave like the animals whose totem spirits have possessed them. This probably represents the first form of *bori* cult practice.

The emergence of the *yan dawa* as pagan *bori* spirits or rural dwellers then follows, symbolising a historical process, mode of thought and growth of the indigenous religion of the Hausa. This category of spirits as already observed were later referred to as dark-complexioned “pagan” *bori* spirits by cult members and other people in Hausaland, a nomenclature which evolved with time, within the process of its history. Some *bori* members refer to them as Maguzawa spirits, since the majority of the Maguzawa live for centuries after the introduction of Islam in rural areas practising *maguzci*, their religion, together with their main vocation, which is farming.

The soldier/warrior *bori* spirits reflect another process in the historical development of the Hausa. Historically, they belong to a period when great Hausa soldiers fought battles in Hausaland and the spirits of these famous Hausa soldiers were immortalised and deified as free *bori* spirits (cf. Gelfand 1959). *Baasheni* represents such a Hausa ancestral spirit. During the *bori* dance, the horse/mare of

¹³ In *bori* trance possession rites, the possessed is considered to be a horse (*doki*) where such a person is male and a mare (*godiya*) if such a person is female. The possessing spirit becomes the rider.

Baasheni dances and moves about ardently with a spear and pretends to threaten and thrust fiercely and fearlessly at enemies. *Auta* (*Dan Auta*), “the last born”, also belongs to this category. *Auta* is a very fierce spirit of the war drums. There are many other warrior spirits in the *yan garki* (company of *bori* soldiers), and the spirit warrior company could have lived historically in time and space. The *bori* spirit of the warrior is retained because of the bravery of its ancestral host when he was on earth. The spirits of famous hunters may also belong to this category, since hunters (a theme which has a romantic tradition among the Hausa and Fulani) also made excellent and disciplined fighting forces. This phenomena might have emerged, therefore, from hero/warrior veneration, however, instead of being referred to as deities, for example as *Shango* and *Ogun* in Yoruba religion, they were referred to as spirits, since spirits, not deities, are the point of focus in both the *maguzanci* and the *bori* cult.

The Muslim *bori* spirits are town dwellers in contrast to “pagan” *bori* spirits who are villagers and therefore rural dwellers. This may well represent the emergence of cities and urban living among the Hausa c. 1000 to 1400 AD. (in contrast to the earlier rural life of the Maguzawa), and its association with trade and commerce, and subsequently with Islam (cf. Crowther 1978:31). They are thus light-complexioned (*farfaru*), indicating the divine, holy and pure nature of the light and truth of Islam. Muslim *bori* spirits are believed to fast and pray like Muslims, respect and obey *Allah* and his prophet Mohammad, *Sallalehu Alewa Sallah*. They observe all Islamic norms and obligations, and the *Sharia* law as practised by Muslims on the *terra firma*. Their chief is the famous *Alhaji Mallam*, regarded as chief *imam*, the head of all *mallams* in the spirit world. All *mallams* are believed to be apportioned duties and functions by him (Shuaibu 1990:173f.).

Fulani *bori* spirits are said to be plenty because according to some informants, the Fulani have today largely taken over the *bori* cult from the Hausa. Thus the historical process that brought the Hausa and Fulani together, and the conquest of the one culturally and the

other by the force of arms,¹⁴ has also created a meeting point in the *bori* cult. *Bori* cult members in Hausaland claim that a *Sarau-niyar Bori*, queen of the spirits, prophesied many years back that more spirits were coming to Hausaland. This prophecy is said to be fulfilled when European spirits joined the host of spirits venerated by *bori* members. They claim that when Europeans came to Hausaland, they brought with them their own *bori* spirits, who are Europeans and therefore Christians.¹⁵ It is interesting that these European “Christian” spirits possess *bori* members who are Muslims!¹⁶ Such “Christian” spirits include among others, *Likita* the medical doctor, Mr. Kar, Mr. Sisidam, Kaparam, etc., who are *bori* spirits. These in their own turn are believed to control uncountable European spirits. Horses/mares behave like Europeans and Asians under trance possession. They may dress neatly in European clothing, smoke cigarettes and speak English.

Other ethnic *bori* spirits represent yet another feature of the *bori* cult. The entrance of spirits of other ethnic groups is manifested in the *bori* cult possession dance. Thus *Achindung* is a Berom spirit and the possessed speaks the Birom language. *Nyamiri* is an Igbo spirit, and speaks Igbo when it possesses a victim. *Iyawo* is a female Yoruba

¹⁴ Historically, the Fulani presence in Hausaland, starting from the 15th century reached a climax in the 19th century with the Fulani *jihad* of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio. In this war, the Fulani defeated the Habe rulers, took over political control of the Hausa, and built a powerful Caliphate (Sokoto). However, this conquest of the sword was to follow a cultural conquest by the Hausa, as they easily imposed their language, customs and political structure on the Fulani. The Fulani have thus for centuries been assimilated by the Hausa way of life, with a great number giving up their nomadic life, to settle in Hausa cities and towns, where intermarriages subsequently followed between the two.

¹⁵ All Europeans are considered by *bori* members to be Christians. This is a thinking that has been a part of the religious opinion of their environment for a long time. In fact, most of the Hausa Muslim world used to and may well still think that way.

¹⁶ All *bori* members regard themselves nowadays as Muslims.

bori spirit and behaves like a Yoruba woman during a *bori* possession dance.¹⁷

Women and the Persistence of Bori Cult

There is strong evidence to suggest that, in the Hausa *jahilenci*,¹⁸ Hausa women played a much more prominent role in healing than their descendants presently do. From extant Hausa proverbs, songs, stories, or *bori* liturgy, one concludes that women *bori* mediums had in early times a central part in the therapeutic practices of their people. The fact that women among the Maguzawa or non-Muslim Hausa are still much more involved in healing than their Muslim counterparts reinforces such a conclusion (Abdalla 1991:40 f., cf. 1981:87, 119, Last 1976:40).

Hausa women enjoyed high status and held political offices and other important positions in pre-jihadic Hausa city states. For instance, of the forty-seven chiefs of old Daura listed by Palmer (1967: 142f.) seventeen were *magajiyas*, queens. It is probable that many of these queens were also medical practitioners, for the power to heal and the authority to govern were mutually exclusive in Hausaland (Abdalla 1991:41). Women also served as heads of their respective clans (Smith 1979:32), and indeed the *magajiya* of Daura in the Bayajida legend (cf. Lange 1996) and Queen Amina of Zaria (Zazzau) exemplify this. Indeed at a time in the past, women were more powerful than men in magic in Hausaland (Tremearne 1914:150).

Women and the Hierarchy of the Bori Cult

Women play important roles and occupy high ritual and social positions in the *bori* cult, and most *bori* adherents are women (Douglas and Kaberry 1969:290). The *bori* cult has a role set and role structure of its functionaries. The highest office which is usually occupied by a woman is that of *magajiya*. Her male counterpart, whose office is

¹⁷ Among the Berom, *Chindung* is a female name, while *Nyamiri* is the Hausa term for Igbo people and *Iyawo* simply means wife or bride in Yoruba.

¹⁸ *Jahilenci* refers to the *jahiliyya* epoch, which denotes the pre-Islamic period of ignorance.

inferior in status to hers is the *ajingi*. These two members normally lead a celibate life upon the assumption of office. The office of *magajiya* has a historical development in Hausaland. In Daura, she used to be the official queen mother, but never the actual mother of the reigning king (cf. Lange 1996). She was normally either widowed, or the wife of a leading *mallam*. All royal princesses underwent a week long marriage preparatory rites in her compound and under her care (Smith 1979:123).

In the *bori* cult, however, the selection of *magajiya* and *ajingi* is through voting by members. The result is then placed through invocatory rites before the spirits for their approval or disapproval, and where a candidate is rejected, another is elected through the same process. The coronation of their leader, however, is conducted by the secular leader of the town, while festivities continue at the *bori* dance centre. The *magajiya* and *ajingi* are interdependent in the exercise of their powers, neither can do without the other. They perform or delegate all ritual functions, including sacrifices. In addition to her office, all visitors and strangers in the town are referred to the *magajiya*'s compound where she makes them comfortable.

These are followed by the offices of the *sarauniya*, queen, and the *sarkin yan bori* or *andi*, king of *bori* members. These are socio-political portfolios, associated mainly with secular functions, as opposed to ritual priestly functions. They cater for the well-being of all cult members. Though well versed in the *bori* rituals, they exercise only social and political roles, performing ritual functions only as deputies, i.e., in the absence of the *magajiya* and/or *ajingi*. They may also in addition perform initiation rites for new members. It is thus clear in the *bori* cult, that the priestly position is placed higher than the political one. It may well represent a period in history, when both religious and secular powers were initially vested in one person, who worked with an assistant, such as the office of a sacred chief/king, who was always assisted by a high priest or chief priest. Such a practice was widespread among other Chadic-speakers, and among most ethnic groups of central Nigeria during the pre-colonial period.

During the *bori* dance, a number of other functionaries perform certain duties (probably on an ad-hoc basis). A *galadima* (chairperson) is chosen to take care of any misunderstanding that may arise in the course of the dance. *Uwar fage*, the “mother (owner) of the dancing field,” takes charge of the dancing field. No dance may take place without the payment of a fee to her for its usage. She sees to the cleaning of the *bori* dance field, scenting the air with sweet smelling perfumes and incenses. A *dan sanda* (policeman) is chosen for the dance. He takes out members who misbehave on the dancing field, keeping them aside for a judge (*alkali*) to dispose of their cases.

Some Factors Responsible for the Female Domination of the *Bori*

Even though the proportion of women to men in the cult has been exaggerated in some writings, the number of women still outnumber that of men. The reasons for this are not far-fetched. A typical Hausa girl’s life is that of absolute and blind obedience to the will of her parents and that of her husband. Marriage is her primary goal and station in life. It is her world, and should be the most valued thing in her life, for from birth she is prepared for nothing else. She is married off between the age of nine and fourteen; seventeen and above is considered too late for marriage (that should not be allowed to happen!).¹⁹ Her hand is very often given into marriage through arrangements by her parents, and sometimes to a man she may consider a total stranger. Her consent in such cases may be of little worth, since parental choice of spouses for daughters — forced marriages — are still common. She may be married to a man old enough to be her father, and who may already be married to one or more wives.

¹⁹ The situation is improving nowadays, but a great deal still needs to be done, since most Muslim female university undergraduates (taking Jos as an example) are married women (and these are few). Most parents still see no need of providing higher education for their unmarried daughters. In some places, unmarried undergraduates are scornfully regarded as prostitutes! Only parents and husbands of foresight allow their daughters/wives to pursue any education beyond high school, that is, if they were initially allowed to go beyond primary school level.

Orphan girls in the past suffered even a worse fate, since they were very often given away without a *sadaaki* (dowry).

A child-wife in a largely polygynous community might initially work closely with one of her older co-wives, who may be old enough to have been her mother.²⁰ Against such a grim backdrop, any kind of psychological frustration may breed and grow. A young married girl may thus run away from her husband to another, facing one problem after the other, and in the extreme *karuwanci*, prostitution, may not be left out. She may end up in the *gidan mata*, "house of women" (prostitution), or the *bori* cult. She may stay in a marriage even though she no longer loves her husband or take the option of divorce. Early marriage is thus one of the factors giving rise to the rather large numbers of *bazawara*, divorcees, among the Hausa people. Added to this are the burden of polygyny, which tends to support the claim that the ratio of women to men among the Hausa is indeed high, giving women a population that is much higher than that of the men,²¹ and the problems of mass poverty and many children.

The *bori* cult, therefore, provides an avenue for a woman to find freedom and escape from a chauvinistic, male dominated world. Gains from and escape into the spirit world accounts for what the woman loses and lacks from the physical "man dominated" world. Lack of love in marriage, maltreatment by the husband and lack of satisfaction in marriage may force a woman to leave her husband. This may partly be responsible for the fairly high divorce rate among Hausa Muslims. Moreover, a man has the absolute right to *saki uku*, i.e. a Hausa

²⁰ A number of women who went through such an experience do not like thinking about that period of servitude in their lives, while others recall with gratitude the kindness of their much older co-wives.

²¹ Male domination of society has always ensured that census figures are falsified in favour of men, because a great deal of them fear that if allowed, women politicians may indeed rise up and seek political office in competition with men. It is the opinion of this writer that the gender issue in the north comes only second to that of religion. The late Muslim Nigerian cleric and orator, Shaikh Abubakar Gummi stated once that two things should not be allowed to happen in Nigeria: having a Christian or a woman as president; both for him are unislamic.

Muslim rite whereby a man has to divorce his wife after verbally expressing lack of love to her up to three times,²² a situation which gives rise to her becoming a divorcee, a *bazawara*. This may in turn precipitate remarriage, a series of marriages and divorces, or in the extreme, it may give birth to concubinage and *karuwanci*, prostitution. Divorce initiates a process of severe stigmatisation of the woman, a social stain which does not in any way affect her male counterpart. Such a frustrated woman may end up being a patient of a *bori* cult and being initiated into the cult as a part of effecting a cure to her ailment. Furthermore, the Islamic religion in Nigeria is totally male dominated, in family structure, family life, practice of religion such as public prayer, leadership in the mosques and public preaching. In a nutshell, women are not supposed to be seen or heard in public where political, religious, and social issues are being discussed. They may only do so at women forums with fellow women.

The *bori* message with regard to women and their lowly position in society in general, and the plight of Hausa girls in particular is, therefore, very clear: The Hausa society should be reorganised. The implication of the marginalisation of the female is such that Hausa *bori* spirits will always find sick, unloved, weary, frustrated girls, younger and older women to initiate. Psychologically, this makes a great deal of sense. A definite way of making a slave out of a girl is to marry her off without her consent before maturity, before she biologically develops into a woman. She matures to a level of self-reasoning as a married woman, to discover that she was cheated by both her parents and husband while she was still too young to think for herself. That might have been the lot of her mother before her, and that of a majority of women in her culture.

Purdah (*kulle* in Hausa) is another likely factor. *Purdah* is an institution in Northern Nigerian Islam which secludes or confines women

²² *Saki uku* means "I hereby release you three times". Once a husband tells his wife on different occasions, "I have released you", up to three times, she must leave his house, even if the couple still loves each other. He may only re-marry her after she has married and divorced another man, however short-lived that marriage may have been.

indoors. In pre-Islamic traditional Hausa society, *purdah* was a custom whereby the nobility maintained a *harem* under confinement, with servants and chaperons attending to the needs of each woman. A majority of men who enforce *kulle* on their wives erroneously think that it is an Islamic tradition. It has three forms: Permanent seclusion, *kullen dinga*, which is imposed on wives of *emirs* and *mallams*; partial seclusion, *kullen tsari*, in which a woman may go out of *purdah* with her husband's permission, but should be chaperoned, and preferably by night; and seclusion of the heart (spiritual seclusion), *kullen zuci*, a type of *purdah* preferred by educated women. The second type is the most common form among Hausa Muslims, though the practice is loosing its significance in a difficult economy, where every hand is needed on deck, to keep the family ship afloat. It is while in *purdah* that *borin gida*, private *bori* or spirit possession, may occur (cf. Danfulani et al., *forthcoming*).

The *borin gida*, the private *bori* by women in *purdah*, seeks for the "freedom of expression for women". Under possession, a housewife may break through the ethos of male dominance by freely expressing her feelings and frustrations towards and making demands on her husband. She may even ask his forgiveness or rebuke him for ill-treatment and/or cruelty. Under normal circumstances she may not approach her husband in such a way. However, as a medium under possession, it is a spirit that is speaking to her husband, not the woman herself. The husband must listen to and obey the divine voice of the spirit (*Ibid.*). Hence *bori* is not only a symbolic, but an actual way for women to break through the "macho-like" male dominance of Hausa Muslim society (Douglas and Kaberry 1969:290).

This trend is not peculiar to *bori* alone, but it is typical of the concept of witchcraft which is female in gender, structure and nature in most African societies, unlike sorcery which is masculine.²³

²³ This does not in any way mean that only women participate in witchcraft, while only males practice sorcery. This reference is to the nature of the crafts only. However, in most societies, sorcery is mainly a male activity, with men preparing the poisons, though women accomplices may be involved in the sorcerous application of the poisonous substances.

Moreover, in new religious movements and Evangelical Pentecostal Churches in Africa today, women play prominent roles, and in some cases are founders of such movements (for example the late Prophetess Abiodun Akinsonwo of the *Aladura* Church movement in Nigeria, and Gaudencia Aoko, founder of the *Maria Legio* Church in Kenya). One of the ways a woman may find freedom and liberty is active involvement in the spiritual realm where gender is of no consequence. The author has observed good examples in spiritist Christian movements in Nigeria and some other “white garment” (*sutana*) churches.

Influence of Islam on the Bori Cult

The conversion of some *bori* spirits into Islam and their transformation into Muslims has contributed to its survival in Northern Nigeria. Moreover, *bori* members accept *iskoki* as creatures of *Allah*. This stems from the *Koran* which categorically states that *jinn* are created by *Allah*. The *iskoki* belong to the category of spirits which fall under *jinn*, *aljanu* and demons. Furthermore, the grouping of *iskoki* into *farfaru*, fair-complexioned ones, regarded as Muslims and *bakaku*, dark-complexioned ones, seen as “pagans” exhibits Islamic influence. This division in the spirit world which initially emanated from the Maguzawa division of spirits into malevolent and benevolent, reflects the Islamic division of the world into *dar-al-harb*, the abode of war (the world of pagans and infidels), and *dar-al-Islam*, the abode of Islam (the Muslim *Jama’at*, community), just as a Jew may differentiate himself from gentiles.

Members of the *bori* cult believe that the spirits are subject to *Allah*’s control and owe their power, existence and origin to Him. “Muslim spirits” recognise and acknowledge *annabi* prophet Mohammed, *sallalehu alewa salah*, as the seal of the prophets. Even though *jinn* never die, they will appear before the judgement throne of *Allah*. All Muslims, *jinn*, *iskoki* and human beings, who disobey *Allah*’s laws and the *hadiths* of the prophet will be thrown into hell fire. “Muslim spirits” also conduct life crisis rituals, such as birth, circumcision, naming, and marriage, according to Islamic injunctions.

The influence of Islam is also evidenced in the *bori* initiation ceremonies. This is exemplified, for example, in the constant invocation of the name of *Allah* throughout the initiation ceremony of a neophyte, and in initiation songs sang by the *goge*, the local guitar players and singers usually invited on such occasions. *Allah* is called upon to help in healing the novice. The spirits are asked in an exorcist manner to take away the disease in the name of *Allah*, if they do not wish "to stay."²⁴ If on the other hand they wish to stay, they are asked for *Allah*'s sake to heal and bless the horse or mare (cf. Danfulani et al., *forthcoming*). Again, the usage of ninety-nine different herbs during initiation to effect healing is an Islamic influence, which may well represent the ninety-nine beautiful names (attributes) of *Allah* in Islam. The constant usage of Arabic words and phrases such as *Salama'alaikum!*, "peace be upon you," and *bisimillahi!*, "in the name of Allah," during initiation and in daily life is a clear evidence of Arab/Islamic influences. Furthermore, chickens, rams and cattle, with various feather and skin colour, respectively, have today largely replaced black he-goats, black rams, black dogs and the occasional human beings (notably albinos) as sacrificial items in the cult (cf. Frobenius 1913:541). The change in sacrificial items is necessary because dogs, he-goats and human beings for sacrifice are *haram*, forbidden, and unacceptable in Islam, whatever skin colour they may possess. Whereas rams, chickens and cows are acceptable to all Muslims, though they may be sacrificed in a fashion similar to *bori* ritual sacrifices or even for the same purposes.

²⁴ Since an initiation ceremony, *girka* (which means to place a pot over the fire), is usually a process of taming and appeasing the spirits into developing friendship with a patient, the number of spirits disturbing a patient is usually drastically reduced to a minimal number. In the rite of elimination, the initiating priestess invites the spirits one by one, asking them whether they wish to remain in the patient and be invoked during initiation ceremonies or not. This explains the phrase "if they do not wish to stay".

Survival of Maguzawa Culture and Practice

Bori is an institution that largely serves as a preserver of aspects of Hausa indigenous culture and religion. An examination of *bori* and its cultural symbolism illuminates the operation of Hausa society, thought forms and patterns. In a nutshell, it reflects traditional Hausa philosophy and philosophising, theology and theologising, and the general attitude to life. The *bori* cult possesses a complex ritual structure in which members have been adequately schooled.

The *bori* cult is part and parcel of *maguzanci*, the Hausa traditional religion, because it is born and nurtured within it. The belief that the *iskoki* spirit beings can enter into union, bond, friendship or “yoke together” with human beings which forms the crux of *bori* is a typical traditional Hausa concept. Hausa traditional religion, *maguzanci*, cared for the *iskoki* spirits, especially their worship and veneration in pre-jihadic times. Traditional Hausa societies possessed taboos associated with *iskoki* spirits and prohibitions that protected the people from incurring their anger. In Hausa mythology, there are numerous encounters between human beings and spirits both benevolent and dangerous. It is believed that a meeting with the former may make one rich, whereas an encounter with the latter may bring death or poverty. This belief in human interaction with spirits among the Hausa exists to contemporary times, even outside the cycle of *bori* membership. Furthermore, it is not limited to *bori* alone, as different forms of the belief are found among many other Nigerian ethnic groups, such as the belief in *mammy-water* spirits and their human lovers.

The *bori* itself is thus a preserver of Hausa traditional religion and culture in an entirely hostile Islamic environment. Not even the *jihad* of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio,²⁵ the Toronkowa teacher and reformer,

²⁵ Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio launched a *jihad* (holy) war in Hausaland, beginning in 1804 in Daura, which was to claim most of Hausaland and parts of Central and Western Nigeria into the Sokoto Caliphate, the Islamic empire which resulted from it.

which was aimed initially at purifying and purging Islam in Hausaland of all traditional elements and practices which blended with it for centuries, was able to totally quench the fire of *maguzanci*, the Hausa traditional religion, and the *bori* cult which constitutes a part of it.

The *bori* cult has strongly survived in Hausaland because of its contributions to the area of alternative medicine. Being mostly medicine men and women, spirit mediums, and therefore diviners, *bori* members constitute a reservoir and depository of a sound knowledge of medicinal herbs, leaves, barks, flowers, and fruits, their pharmaceutical properties and recipes. This singular contribution is perhaps the strongest factor responsible for the popularity and resilience of the cult in most places. The initial typical attitude of Christians and Muslims, unfamiliar with *bori*, even traditional medicine, is that of utter contempt, disdain and apathy. Yet when all efforts to solve a crisis or cure a health problem fail, they very often resort to consulting them and their sometimes unhygienic and unorthodox healing methods, even if they have to consult them secretly. Thus some Hausa Muslim peasants, nobles and their kings offer money and some presents to *bori* cult members in order to obtain local medications, protective, productive and destructive charms, amulets and talismans, referred to in Hausa as *guru* and *laya*. These charms which still enjoy wide patronage in Hausa communities can be traced back for hundreds of years as part of the rich cultural heritage of the Maguzawa. In fact, pre-jihadic Habe rulers like *Sarki Yaji* of Kano were accused of these same crimes against Islam, since it was said that they were frequent patronisers of the “pagan” (Maguzawa) *kurmi* market of Kano, where they partook in “pagan” sacrifices, worship of the deities and ate sacrificial meat, which included those of animals considered *haram*, and therefore prohibited by Islam. Today, many Muslims and non-Muslims openly patronise the cult while the Muslim clerics who preach against them have made little impact, since neither they themselves have succeeded in eradicating the cult nor have their members stopped patronising them in huge numbers for their medicines.

The similarity between the Arab and Hausa world view and culture is yet another factor that has aided the survival of the *bori* cult, and indeed Maguzawa traditional religion. The Hausa *iska*, and the Arab *aljan* refer to spirit(s). Both societies before and after the introduction of Islam believe in the existence of countless numbers of spirit forces. Therefore, when Islam was introduced in Hausaland and the Hausa discovered that Islam accepted the existence of spirits, i.e. the *aljanu*, they quickly dressed their spirits, *iskoki*, in Arab garb and regalia, so they could look exactly like Arab spirits. Thus the words *aljanu* and *iskoki* (pl.), *aljan* and *iska* (sing.) are used synonymously or interchangeably by the Hausa and non-Muslims to refer to *jinn*/spirits.

The initial tolerance of Islam to the traditional religions of Africa has accounted for the survival of the *bori* cult and the *maguzanci*. Trimingham (1968) in his theory for the causal factors of mass-conversion of Africans to Islam and Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa opined that Islam gained more from the drift of converts in the face of the collapse of the structures that propped up traditional institutions as a result of the introduction of rapid forces of change because Islam tolerated traditional religious practices (cf. Ikenga-Metuh 1986:259 ff., Horton 1971:85 and Danfulani 1992:10 ff.). This is what Ikenga-Metuh (1986, 1987) describes in the works of Trimingham as the "shattered microcosm" and in the work of Horton as the intellectualist theory.

The British scholar Humphrey Fisher lent further support to this position when he explained that Islam takes its members through three major stages of conversion. He explains that the first stage of the conversion of adherents of traditional religion to Islam is the quarantine, a stage when a lone Muslim missionary or trader settles and starts preaching in a given area. After the quarantine stage of the introduction of Islam by a lone *mallam* or a group of faithfules, the period of mixing follows. The mixing stage is an incubation period which allows the convert to blend old traditional ways with the new Islamic teachings and rites, as s/he gradually acquires more ritualistic practices of his/her new found faith, Islam. This may continue for a long time (as it did in Hausaland under the Habe rulers, who mixed Islam

with “pagan” Maguzawa practices). Only a reformist movement, such as a *jihad*, terminates the stage, and plunges the new convert into the orbit of his/her new religion — Islam. This may be led by a *sheikh*, *imam* or *madhi* who in his *jihad* attempts to reconcile the people with *Allah*. With reform, the convert now terminates and severs all links with the old indigenous or “pagan” religion. This we see clearly fulfilled in the lives and ministries of three West African Islamic reformers: Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio in Hausaland, Sheikh Sekou Ahmadu in Masina and Sheikh Umar, the Torkulor leader of Mali. This is a typical characteristic of Islam in Africa (Lewis 1969:39-60 *passim*). Lewis asserts that for as long as traditional beliefs can be adjusted in such a way that they fall into place within Muslim schemes in which the absoluteness of *Allah* remains unquestionable, Islam does not ask its new adherents to abandon their accustomed confidence in all mystical forces.

The *bori* cult itself has not remained static. From its days as a part of *maguzanci*, Hausa traditional religion, it has adapted to changes. This dynamic nature of the religion has so far contributed to its immortalisation. With the demise of a great chunk of Maguzawa religion, the *bori* cult has adapted itself to the situation within which it finds itself. With the planting of Islam in Hausaland the *bori* spirits were exposed and introduced to Islamic religious practices. The *iskoki* conversion to Islam thus fitted properly within the context of Islam (Ottenberg 1960:477-485 *passim*). With the conquest of Fulani jihadists from 1804, *bori* spirits adopted Fulani names, making it possible for Fulani Muslim spirits to fit well into the cult. The cult again adapted itself to the coming of Europeans, a characteristic reflected in their interaction with other ethnic groups.

This dynamic and flexible ability of the *bori* cult to adapt to historical circumstances contributed to its survival. In fact this dexterity on the part of the *bori* cult has proven to be its saving quality and trait. It is a truism that Islam does not tolerate image worship. It condemns ancestor worship and idolatry in all their ramifications, and has no images at all in its places of worship. *Bori* cult members also do not have images in their sacred places, since the Maguzawa-Hausa

indigenous religion curved no images of its deities, ancestors and spirits, because spirits, the focus of its worship, are said to be invisible, and when visible can adapt any form or shape. This lack of images in their places of worship and in the cult as a whole has aided its survival, since Muslims cannot out-rightly condemn the practice based on the allegation that it is *tsafi*, "idol worship". In order to fit within Islam, and to be accepted as such, *bori* as a cult discarded the use of idols, a concept present in its primary form, as seen in early Babushean Maguzawa religious practice of the *Tsomburburai* fame. Thus even though not endorsed, it is tolerated since it has no images.

Though most Muslims treat *bori* members with the air of indifference, arrogant contempt, or even disdainful rejection, all *bori* members claim to be Muslims themselves, observing as do their spirits all Islamic obligations and injunctions. They celebrate all Muslims festivals, perform the daily prayers, observe the *ramadan* (days of fasting), and keep the other pillars of Islam. Muslims, therefore, find it increasingly difficult to alienate and condemn them, and are thus forced, even if reluctantly, to tolerate them.

On asking *bori* members to advance reasons for the persistence of their cult, besides the medical factor, which nearly all of them mentioned as a service they render to society, they also mentioned social factors. The *bori* cult, according to one of them, is very useful to any town. Most visitors and strangers to the town ask for a *bori* centre, because the cult and its members, both humans and spirits welcome visitors. This is one of the chief functions of the *maga-jiyar bori*. Therefore, all emirs support the *bori* cult, according to members, because they help their towns to grow.²⁶ The majority of Muslims, however, condemn *bori* cult as *tsafi*, "paganism", and see

²⁶ Hannah Audu, Old *bori* woman (a member for more than thirty years), 70 years old, interviewed in Dass Town of Bauchi State, 15th/9/1990 by Shuaibu (1990: 201, footnote 7). This sweeping statement will definitely not be accepted by a majority of Muslims, in Northern Nigeria, however, Hassan and Shuaibu (1962) state that during the period 1804 to 1944, the *bori* cult was practiced in the premises of the Emir's palace in Abuja, being driven out during the reign of Abubakar. The symbol of the

it as having nothing to do with Islam (Sule 1973). In their book *A Chronicler of Abuja* (1962) the authors, Hassan and Shuaibu describe *bori* as nothing but a cult of beggars and prostitutes, who use their performance and the art of spirit possession as an excuse for sexual orgies, while Madauci (1968), as already observed, simply refers to it as "devil possession".

Conclusion: An Analysis of the Factors for the Survival of the Bori Cult

We have seen that *bori* spirits possess a flexible character which enabled them to adapt to religious and historical changes in Hausaland. The *bori* phenomena thus reflects the Hausa attitude towards visitors and their interaction with them. Traditionally, the Hausa value and protect strangers in their midst. Chiefs sometimes quarrel amongst themselves because each one would like an important visitor to settle in his town, the power of a Hausa chief being symbolised by the number of people under him. This is illustrated in the *bori* cult as all spirits — Muslims and Christian, Fulani and European, Berom, Ngas, *Nyamiri* and Yoruba — find accommodation in an initially purely Hausa traditional cult. The *bori* cult thus symbolises a part of the historical process, philosophy and growth of the indigenous religion of the Hausa. It emphasises the continuity of the Hausa cultural heritage of hospitality, warmth, friendship, accommodation and cheerful acceptance of visitors no matter where they come from, in its total innocence of pure Africanness.

The "avoidance culture" adapted by the spirits and the patterns of their joking relationship is a carry over from both Hausa and Fulani cultures. The Hausa-Fulani woman avoids her first son because of *kunya*, shyness. The child is usually adopted by a relation, such that the child is treated by its parents as a total stranger and is avoided. The parents may never call the child by name. The political and social institutions of the Hausa are also reflected in those of the *bori* spirits.

cult in the palace then was a stone, two feet long and a foot wide, and pregnant women offered sacrifices to the stone for safe delivery.

Each community of the spirits has its own king. They live in twelve or fourteen compounds, with a hierarchy of officials. Even the leper spirit has political authority, since it is said to be the gatekeeper at Jangaru, the city of the spirits, and no spirit may live in Jangaru without his permission. This symbolises another social phenomenon of Hausa culture, where lepers and other handicapped persons are seen at city gates begging for alms. At Jangaru it is thus the leper spirit who opens and closes the gate, as it obtains on earth.²⁷

Each Hausa community has its sets of leaders such as the *Sarkin Maharba*, the chief of the hunters, the *Sarkin Noma*, the chief of the Farmers, the *Sarkin Makidda*, the chief of the music makers, the *Sarkin Pawa*, the chief of the butchers, etc. *Bori* spirits are also said to possess such leaders. The *iskoki* spirits are reported to have the best and wisest judges, thus *bori* cult members do not go to secular courts, unless invited by non-members. A court session of the spirits is made up of five popular spirit kings: *Sulaimanu* (Solomon), *Biddareni*, *Sarkin Fagam*, *Sarkin Agam Adamu*, and *Mallam Alhaji*, the sixth being *Alkali*, a judge or magistrate, would form a quorum. *Bori* members usually accept the verdict of *iskoki* spirits (given under mediumistic trance possession) as final.

Thus *bori* reflects some Hausa traditional values. It provides us with *positional meaning*, in that *bori* is a symbol of the totality of Hausa cultural elements, beliefs and institutions in society, from before the introduction of Islam, and by adaptation down to the contemporary period. Rites have a purpose in human society, thus the *telic structure* of the *bori* rites has affected the people to the extent that the *bori* rites have simply refused to die in the face of Islam. Thus the persistence of the *bori* cult as "an island" in the "sea" of Hausa-Fulani Muslims, centuries after *iskoki* worship and *maguzanci*, Hausa traditional religion, have supposedly been crushed by Islam, shows that *bori* rites have had a purpose for and profound influence on the lives of the people who profess it.

²⁷ He is the first to arrive and to leave the city gate, morning and evening, in search of alms as a means of livelihood.

Competition over limited medical resources between *mallam* Muslim healers through administration of “erasure” (cf. El-Tom 1985, 1987) and *bori* spirit-mediums (cf. Abdalla 1991:40) led to the strong condemnation of the *bori* as an unislamic reversion to the *jahiliyyah* period by the *mallams*.²⁸ It is however tolerated as a part of *wasa* and *al’ada*, i.e., traditional theatrical entertainment performance and festival play (*Ibid.*).

The establishment of Islam in Hausaland after the fifteenth century initiated significant political, economic and social transformations in the society which adversely affected gender and cross-gender relations, particularly the marginalisation of women in a society where they once enjoyed an almost equal social, political and religious status with men, and in some instances, even higher. The success of the Sokoto *jihad* further accentuated and concretised the social stratification of society, both vertically and horizontally (*Ibid.*: 41, cf. 1981:170), with women increasingly finding themselves the economic and jural minors of their male counterparts. Arabic and its intrinsic relationship with religion, social knowledge, administration and politics all overnight became the privileged domain of men to the exclusion of women (*Ibid.*, cf. 1981:132 f.). The *bori* cult could be viewed in this sense as a vehicle for redressing social injustice in an Islamized male dominated society. Its flexibility and dexterity enable it to accommodate changes and adapt itself to present religious realities, both at ideological and practical levels. At the ontological and supernatural level subtle changes occur in their world view, with the all embracing omnipotent, almighty *Allah* replacing the old Maguzawa Deity, *Mai Sama, Ubangiji Iyayengiji*, the owner of heaven and the Lord of Lords, who was a more or less remote God not directly involved in the affairs of humans beings.

²⁸ This does not mean that the author deems *bori* as Islamic, since it is clearly an extension of Hausa traditional religion, however, such a competition and rivalry heightens the ambivalent relationship between the two, ranging from extreme rejection by the clergy to open or secret tolerance by those who appreciate Hausa tradition and care for its preservation.

The hierarchy of the *iskoki*, the *bori* spirits, was injected with new powerful Muslim spirits such as *Alhaji Mallam* (the pilgrim), *Almajiri* (the disciple), *Dan Mallam* (the son of the teacher), *Waziri* (the vizier), etc. A *Sarkin Aljanu*, king of the spirits, emerged in Jangaru (the city of the *jinn*), just as there is a *Sarkin Musulmi*, king for every Muslim *Jama'at* community. In Nigeria, for instance, the *Sultan* of Sokoto is the spiritual head of the Muslims in the area roughly belonging to the Sokoto Caliphate. The *Sarkin Aljanu*, king of the *jinn*, is believed to conduct court activities, with a *waziri* (vizier), council of chiefs, *dogarai* (police force), court *mallams*, etc. Impersonating "Muslim" spirits tends to display circumscribed Muslim characterisation during possession, such as dressing neatly, eating lawful foods, not smearing their faces with faeces, and avoiding acts prohibited by Islam. *Bori* possession ceremonies are as a rule not held during the period of the *ramadan* (the days of fasting) when all spirits according to Muslims are kept in captivity because it is a holy period (*Ibid.*: 42, cf. Madauci 1968:115).

The *bori* cult successfully reconciled Hausa indigenous world view with Islamic cosmology, giving a prominent place to *Allah*, such that for *bori* members, as is the case with Muslims, everything depends on the will of *Allah* — life and death, wealth and poverty, health and sickness, all crises, afflictions and critical events in life. All occurrences, good or bad, are accepted as part of human life and *Allah's* will and divine/predestined plan for an individual or community. For *bori* members, *Allah* is the ultimate power, even though He does not meddle directly in petty human daily affairs. Rather, His agents, the angels and *jinn-iskoki*-spirits regularly carry out His assignments, for they cannot act on their own. Thus God-*Allah* for the Maguzawa is still somewhat a remote deity whose role in human affairs has been taken over by *iskoki* or *bori* spirits, though He may seem to be more active than the *Ubangiji* of the pre-Islamic era (*Ibid.*, cf. Greenberg 1947:64). However, the *iskoki* spirit forces are by nature more or less independent of *Allah's* will and these belligerent spirits, who possess both malevolent and benevolent powers are regarded as the cause of all fortunes or misfortunes in the Maguzawa world.

These ambivalent spirit forces therefore cannot be controlled only by reference to the will of *Allah* as the Hausa Muslims will do, but also through manipulation of their powers to solve the never ending problems of humanity. One of these mediums of manipulation is *bori* trance possession. Women exploit the *borin gida*, the private *bori*, to escape temporarily from male chauvinism, cruelty, and domination. The lofty position of women in the cult should not be mistaken for prostitution, and loose behavior during the *bori* dance should not be equated with nude dancing, sex orgies and *daudu* homosexuality, often associated with it. In fact, most *bori* women are responsible house wives, faithful to their spouses (Shuaibu 1990). Loose living, prostitution and moral laxity is characteristic of the society in which they find themselves, not necessarily because of the *bori* phenomenon, for this is a feature associated with early marriage, high divorce rate and polygyny. *Daudu* homosexual relationships found in some sections of Hausa society is not a particular characteristic of the *bori* cult.

Finally, the strong persistence of the *bori* cult in Hausaland and beyond is a reality, and a number of people still depend on the *bori* cult for medical aid in a country where only a semblance of a biomedical health care delivery system exists in rural areas, and only for those who can afford their exorbitant cost in urban areas. In summary, therefore, the major factors for the survival of the *bori* cult in Hausaland are three: the role of women, traditional medicine and the ability of the cult to hibernate under the umbrella of Islamic practices and world view. Thus from all indications, the *bori* cult will flourish in Hausaland for a long time, as an island in the midst of a turbulent and hostile sea of Islam.

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BOOK REVIEWS

FRITZ GRAF (Ed.), *Einleitung in die lateinische Philologie*. Series: Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft — Stuttgart and Leipzig: B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft 1997 (X + 725 p.) ISBN 3-519-07434-6 (cloth).

In his foreword the editor Fritz Graf outlines the program of the book, which is to present the classics from the perspective of cultural science. This anthropological turn does not only provide for the student of latin literature, to whom the book is primarily addressed, the necessary information about Roman culture, but also for the student of the history of religions different helpful introductions to the domains, where she or he requires knowledge about how to deal with the sources and how to understand the cultural context of the subject, such as for example the basics of textual criticism, epographics, numismatics, and archeology; the history of the latin language and literature; Roman history, law, and philosophy. All these — and others not mentioned — are written by well known scholars in a comprehensive way.

The chapter about Roman religion is divided into three parts: on “Republican Time” (by John Scheid), the “Imperial Time” (by Mary Beard), and “Christianity from the beginnings to Late Antiquity” (by Christoph Marksches). John Scheid convincingly works out the new approach to Roman ritual, seen in its cultural and social context and political framing. Paying special attention to the organizational forms of religious practice, he aims to show how religion actually works, thus giving a picture which takes into account the complexity of a polytheistic system. The reviewer would like to go one step further by making use of the literary tradition for arriving at a better understandig of Roman myth, thus illuminating the meanings and contents of religious practice. What she misses in the first part — some indications to the symbolic values of the festival calendar — should be presupposed to the second, where Mary Beard represents very lucidly the development of the emperor’s cultic veneration as well as the insertion of dynastic festivals in the traditional calendar, yet omitting all those features of the imperial time which had already been part of republican religion. These two parts being nevertheless well integrated, the third part of the chapter about Roman religion — dealing in an informative way with the rise of christianity — is rather

monolithic, reflecting as it does the scientific situation: With rare exceptions, questions concerning this subject are discussed inside the area of theology.

To summarize: the "Introduction to Latin Philology" provides for us a large amount of useful information easily accessible; at the same time it mirrors the state of affairs in the development of classics. It is our task to follow the admonitions of the editor — aiming at an integral view of Roman culture.

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DOROTHEA BAUDY

CARL-A. KELLER, *Ramakrishna et la voie de l'amour* — Paris: Bayard Editions 1997 (305 p.) ISBN 2-227-32505-4 (paper).

Ramakrishna (abbreviated in the following as R) was undoubtedly one of the most fascinating examples (he was too extraordinary to be described as representative, too typically Hindu to be called eccentric) of 19th century Indian (Bengali) spirituality. He was not a "fool of God" — a phenomenon well known in western religious history — but, as Keller so well puts it, the "madman of God". The literature on him is immense, but a short, scholarly and historically reliable account has been sadly lacking. This has at last been provided by Prof. Keller's scrupulously objective and critical whilst undisguisedly admiring study. Keller evinces a keen eye for, and understanding of, both the socio-cultural realities of 19th cent. Bengal (and Calcutta!) and the individual psychology of his subject. R. hit western consciousness *via* Vivekananda (1893), and the literature generated by the latter reached a first peak with Romain Rolland (1929) but continued to e.g. Aldous Huxley (and his conception of mysticism), Christopher Isherwood (1965) and Toynebee (in his Foreword to C.A. Stark's *God of All*, 1974, R. is praised as the greatest and "comprehensive" apostle of the unique message of religious plurality, a view which Keller corrects and sets right). In fact, the quest of the "historical R" behind the Vivekananda screen is by now a legitimate subject of research.

As a Christian and the son of India missionaries the author evinces (one is tempted to say shares) a profound understanding of what mystical spirituality is about. He also has enough critical sense and Indianist knowledge to deplore the somewhat westernized viz. "christianized" and to some extent bowdlerized overtones of the English 1055 pp. version (*The Gospel [!]* of

Sri R.) of the original 5 vol. Bengali standard account by Mahendranath Gupta, writing under the sign "Ma" and M. (The "western" overtones can also be discerned in the English version [1952], with Foreword by Aldous Huxley, of *Sri R. The Great Master*, pp. 944, by Swami Saradananda, "a direct disciple", where R. is described as "the Messiah of Bengal"). The socio-cultural background is highlighted by the fact that many of the founder-members of the very different, "modernizing", and *prime facie* incompatible Brahmo-Samaj felt attracted to R. His "Mother" (i.e., Kali) mysticism together with his non-consummated marriage and preference of young disciples are of course a special golden gift to psychoanalysts. Keller takes due note but sensibly substitutes the term "homoeroticism" for "homosexuality".

R. was not, at first, enthusiastically received even in his own environment where the Shankara version of *advaita* Hinduism was much in favour, especially among intellectuals, and Vivekananda saw to it that R. was seen in that light. As early as 1898, Max Müller rejected this interpretation and presented R. as the great *bhakta* par excellence. A hundred years later C.A. Keller definitely substantiates, and considerably deepens, Max Müller's insight. And this brings us to the chief merit of the book. It is not only a study of R., his background, personality and impact, but one of the most important contributions to the study of *bhakti* as such (here perhaps the author's Christian background may have helped). Instead of criticism a regret may be voiced: most readers about Indian religion and spirituality nowadays read English rather than French. It is a pity that this insightful study is not available to them.

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R.J. ZWI WERBLOWSKY

AHARON R.E. AGUS, *Hermeneutic Biography in Rabbinic Midrash. The Body of this Death and Life.* (Studia Judaica, Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums, 16) — Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter 1996 (242 p.) ISBN: 3-11-015067-0 DM 168.00.

Starting from the nature of the literary composition of Rabbinic literature, the author refers to its double characteristics: its unreliability as historical biography, and its nature as connectedness like a knitted garment. The "logic"

of the (not literary, but hermeneutic) connection is not to be found in the “parts” of the whole, like an academic work. Rabbinic literature cannot be selected in topics, themes or historical events, but in the whole *per se*. This consideration leads him to an other point of research, the “hermeneutic biography”. His intention is to “try to break out the boundaries of the individual texts by searching for the ever-large patterns to which, in my opinion, the texts belongs... The results of my efforts here tends to be a montage, or a montage made up of montage” (p. 2).

The book consists of two “prologues” (pp. 4-11: the crisis of will; pp. 12-18: the fear of nothingness), two main parts (I, pp. 19-80: R. Eleazar ben R. Simeon ben Yohai and his Wife or: the Body of this Death; II, pp. 81-201: the latter of R. Phinehas ben Yair or: the Body of Life) and finally two “epilogues” (pp. 202-231: the temptation unto nothingness; p. 232: when I want, you do not want). Indexes of biblical Sources, Rabbinic sources, Sages, and of subjects round off the work.

Agus’ book has little to do with a “classical” research on Rabbinic hermeneutics, rather wants to be seen as an attempt to imitate the Rabbinic characteristic style. According to the author, imitation and not (scientific) observation is the key to understand the Rabbinic mind behind and within the text (texture). Understanding is a little achievement if not bound with contemplation. To sum up the theological and philosophical aim of the book: “religious man’s knowledge of God wells up in an ambivalence where even terror and yearning cannot ravel the thread of being and not-being” (p. 3).

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